

Young Klondike

STORIES OF A GOLD SEEKER.

Issued Semi-Monthly—By Subscription \$1.25 per year. Entered as Second Class Matter at the New York Post Office, by Frank Tousey.

No. 24.

NEW YORK, FEBRUARY 1, 1899.

Price 5 Cents.



"Ye gods and little fishes! but this bear is a tough one!" cried the Unknown. Just then a low growl was heard. A big black head was looking down at them. "Look! Look!" cried Young Klondike. "It's the other bear! He has come to avenge his brother's death!"

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Issued Semi-Monthly—By Subscription \$1.25 per year. Entered as Second Class Matter at the New York, N. Y., Post Office, March 15, 1898. Entered according to Act of Congress in the year 1899, in the office of the Librarian of Congress, Washington, D. C., by Frank Tousey, 29 West 26th Street, New York.

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Young Klondike's Big Black Bear;

OR,

Working the "Man in the Moon."

BY AUTHOR OF YOUNG KLONDIKE.

CHAPTER I.

THE MAN WHO CAME DOWN THE CREEK IN THE STORM.

ONE rainy evening, late in the fall, Young Klondike and his friend and partner, Dick Luckey, were playing chess by the comfortable wood fire in the big sitting room of their home on the El Dorado creek.

Edith Welton and her friend, Mrs. Colvin, were sewing on the other side of the fire, and the Unknown, that mysterious little detective who ever accompanied Young Klondike in his wanderings, was sound asleep in the big easy chair, with a three months' old newspaper thrown over his head to keep the firelight off his eyes.

"Check!" cried Dick, making a jump with his knight. "Now I've got you, Ned Golden! Get out of that hole if you can!"

"Is it a mate, Dick?" asked Edith.

"Don't know yet. That's what it's intended to be, though."

"Hold on!" said Ned. "I don't give up. There's always a way out, you know."

"No way out here!" laughed Dick. "I defy you!"

Ned leaned back in his chair, thrusting his hands into his trouser pockets.

"Well, I guess you are right," he said. "I am obliged to admit that it's a mate."

"Ned, I should think you'd be ashamed of yourself," said Edith, with one of her rippling laughs. "That makes three games running you've let Dick beat you, and you used to lay claim to being something of a chess player, too."

"And do still, Edith. One must strike bad luck

sometimes. I'm not going to drop off my perch just because Dick happens to beat me a couple of games."

"Drop off your perch!" cried Edith. "What an expression. I do wish you wouldn't talk slang, Ned. Drop off your perch, indeed; you might as well say——"

Right then Edith's remarks were cut short by the Unknown dropping off his chair and striking his head upon the floor with a loud thump, which woke him up in a hurry.

"What in thunder is the matter with you now?" cried Ned, exploding with laughter. "Is that the way you always wake up, old man?"

"Well, no, not as a rule," replied the Unknown, sitting up on the floor rubbing his head and looking rather foolish, "thought I would that time just for a change."

"Get up out of that, Zed," laughed Edith. "You look just too foolish for anything. If you can't keep awake you had better go to bed."

"Thank you, I'm not ready for bed yet," replied the Unknown, getting up off the floor. "I have to make the rounds of the camp before I turn in."

"Nonsense! It isn't necessary," said Young Klondike.

"Yes, it is. You know I sent the guard to bed, and told him I'd do the patrol act till midnight. It's Bill McManus, he's suffering from a terrible cold."

Now it was the rule of the Young Klondike as this, the most profitable of the many mines belonging to the firm of Golden & Luckey was called, that each night a guard was set. Two men generally did duty, one patrolling until midnight, and the other from midnight until morning.

Not that there was any danger of an attack on the

"HANDSOME HARRY."

camp either by Indians or toughs. The Young Klondike was altogether too strong for that, but fire was liable to break out, and Ned thought it wiser to keep a watch.

"It's about time to make the rounds now," he remarked, looking at his watch. "Half-past nine. I'll go with you, Zed, and then if you feel sleepy and want to turn in, I'll be my own watchman until midnight; it don't bother me a bit to keep awake."

"No," replied the Unknown; "if I undertake to do anything I usually do it, and I don't need your help."

"How about arresting your man?" laughed Edith. "You've been undertaking to do that ever since I've known you, and I don't see that you are any nearer to it than when you began."

Now upon this remark hangs a tale and said tale involves a few words of introduction concerning the characters who are to play the parts in our story. While Young Klondike is getting on his overcoat and big boots perhaps it would be just as well to go into this and have it over with after which our story will run right along.

Golden & Luckey was the style of this mining firm and as its reputation has become national we need scarcely state that its operations were confined to the Klondike region. No firm has met with more success in working the gold claims of that desolate country. Golden & Luckey are worth their millions to-day and yet only a short time since Ned Golden and Dick Luckey were poor clerks in New York City, who were seized with the idea of going to the Klondike, and never relaxed their efforts in the matter until they became the prosperous mine owners that we find them to-day.

Edith Welton was a young lady whose life Ned Golden saved from a sinking steamer on the voyage to Juneau.

Edith was then on her way to Dawson City to find her father, whom she had reason to believe was located there. Not succeeding in this she cast her fortunes with those of her fellow travelers and became a member of the firm of Golden & Luckey.

Edith was a thorough little business woman with no nonsense about her, and had proved a great help to her partners. She invariably accompanied them on their prospecting tours, and had become quite expert in locating mines.

As for the Unknown he was a mystery. Although he was a fast friend with his partners they knew him by no other name than Zed, which he declared was the short for Zedekiah, and that such was actually his Christian name.

Whether this was true or not neither Ned, Dick nor Edith knew, for the Unknown would never divulge his last name.

He claimed to be a detective visiting the Klondike in search of a mysterious criminal whom he called "his man."

As to who this man was or what crime he had committed, the remaining members of the firm of Golden

& Luckey were as ignorant as they were of the Unknown's proper cognomen.

As the Unknown they had begun business together, and unknown the detective's name seemed likely to remain to the last.

So much for introductions. By this time Young Klondike has his boots on, his overcoat and mackintosh, too, and is ready for any sort of rough weather he may happen to strike outside.

"Ready, Zed?" he asked the Unknown, who was fussing away with a lantern which for some mysterious reason wouldn't light.

"Would be if it wasn't for this infernal lantern. Something seems to be the matter with the wick."

"Let me try it; perhaps I can make it go."

"No, sir! By the Jumping Jeremiah, if I'm so far gone that I can't light a lantern I may as well go out and drown myself in El Dorado creek at once."

"It wouldn't be necessary to go to the creek for that," laughed Ned. "All you would have to do would be to stand still in one place outside. Heavens, I never saw it rain so in all my life, and since I came to the Klondike I've seen some pretty tall rains, too."

Certainly, Young Klondike had not overstated the case.

When he opened the outer door, the wind blew the rain inside in a perfect sleet.

Ned shut the door as quick as possible, and shielding the lantern as well as he could, pressed after the Unknown who had gone out ahead.

"Tough night!" bawled the detective, scarcely able to make his voice heard above the blast.

"That's what," replied Ned. "We want to make short work of this. I'd a good sight rather be back playing chess with Dick."

They went from one shaft house to another flashing the lantern inside.

"Mighty little danger of fire to-night," yelled the detective. "This is like holding an umbrella over a duck in a thunderstorm, but we may as well make a finish of it before we go back."

Next it was the storehouse, and then the big boarding house where the men lodged.

Quite a number were still out of bed and gathered in the big sitting room.

They greeted Young Klondike with the greatest respect when he looked in upon them. Ned Golden was ever popular with his men.

The last place they looked at was the little wharf down at the creek.

No fear of fire here, of course, but Ned was most anxious lest the wharf should be washed away, for El Dorado creek can turn out a good deal of water when it is so inclined, and it was running like a mill race now.

Ned and the Unknown stood on the wharf and flashed the lantern up the rushing stream.

"Good job we got the boats up this afternoon," remarked the detective. "There wouldn't have been a ghost of a show for them now."

"That's what's the matter," said Ned. "It's a terrible storm."

For a moment they stood there with the rain beating about them, but neither spoke.

"Strange, isn't it?" remarked the detective at last.

"What is strange?"

"What curious sounds one hears in a storm."

"The very thing I was thinking of."

"Seemed to me just now as if I could hear some one calling away up the creek, but of course it can't be so."

"Hello! Did you think that? By gracious, I heard the same identical thing."

"You don't mean it! I thought it was mere imagination."

"Oh, I heard it all right, and—hark! There! What do you call that?"

In the distance a faint cry was heard. Then it came again louder, seemingly swept down toward them by the wind.

"By the Jumping Jeremiah, it is some one calling!" cried the Unknown. "Ye gods and little fishes! I wouldn't wonder one bit if it was my man."

"Come, now, none of that nonsense! This is serious business!" exclaimed Ned. "If there is anyone on the creek to-night he must be a madman or worse. Run for the rope, Zed! We'll try our best to save him. If he gets into the rapids it will be all day with his craft whatever it may be."

The Unknown needed no second bidding.

Running into a little shed back of the wharf where Young Klondike had just tied up his handsome naphtha launch for the winter, he presently returned with a coil of rope long enough to reach across the creek.

"Help, help, help!"

There was no mistaking the cry this time. It was perfectly clear and distinct.

The boat was evidently coming nearer, and a very serious matter it was likely to prove for its occupant, if Young Klondike and the Unknown did not succeed in lending him a helping hand.

But the chances were all in favor of their being able to do it, for Ned was quite expert with the lasso, and could throw a rope as well as any cowboy.

"Hold the lantern so that the light will shine up stream, Zed," he said. "Now then, keep her steady. No use for us to call back, I suppose."

"Not the slightest. I've got a pretty powerful voice, but I wouldn't undertake to throw it against the wind."

"Help! Help! Help!" came the cry again. "Young Klondike! Hello! Hello!"

"He sees us!" cried Ned.

"Not a bit of it."

"But he's calling me."

"No, he isn't. It's the mine he's hailing. The man knows his danger and wants help."

"There he is!" cried Ned, suddenly. "See him! Heavens! The boat is going like a rocket! Shall we be able to help him? I doubt it very much, indeed!"

Looking up stream they could now see a man seated in a canoe coming down the creek like mad.

If he was possessed of a paddle he was making no effort to use it, and indeed, it would have done him no good if he had, for the creek was rising every moment and the force of the current was so great that it would have been just impossible to paddle ashore.

And yet it was very necessary for this unknown navigator to get ashore if he expected to save his life, for just below the mine were the rapids. Here El Dorado creek ran between many big bowlders and over dozens of sunken rocks.

The sunken rocks were, of course, all deeply covered now, but to keep the canoe off the bowlders would be next to impossible. It was, in fact, a foregone conclusion when Young Klondike threw the rope that if the man did not catch it he was lost.

But the man in the canoe, whoever he might be, was fully alive to his danger.

Long before this he had spied Ned and the Unknown upon the wharf, and he understood that an attempt was about to be made to save him, and that whether it was to prove successful or not depended upon himself.

He stood up in the canoe just before it came opposite to the wharf and motioned to Young Klondike to throw the rope.

Whirling it around his head, Ned let it fly.

It dropped across the canoe, and the man caught it.

"Pull in!" he yelled. "Pull in! Thank Heaven, and thank you, whoever you may be! I'm saved! I'm saved!"

CHAPTER II.

A TALK WITH THE "MAN IN THE MOON."

HE was a tall, slab-sided individual, with a straggling beard, tow-colored, and heavier on the right side than the left.

His clothes were thin and shabby, and clung to his long, lank body in the most uncomfortable fashion.

Young Klondike, who was well acquainted with all the old hands along El Dorado creek and up in French Gulch, remarked to the Unknown that this was a stranger. Certainly they had never seen the man before.

He hung on to the rope like grim death, and let Ned and the detective pull the canoe to the wharf. He helped to pull it up on shore, and stepped out briskly enough, and then all at once he threw up his hands and sank down unconscious at their feet.

"What's the matter now?" cried Ned. "Is this man dead on our hands?"

"Nonsense!" exclaimed the Unknown. "He has only fainted. Here Ned, take hold of him and help me carry him up to the house."

They got hold of the stranger's head and feet, and shouting to Dick started up the bank.

"HANDSOME HARRY."

But the wind swept their voices away, and before they reached the door the man revived.

"What's the matter now?" he asked. "Put me down. I can walk. There isn't anything wrong with me."

And walk he did the rest of the way, but it was only with the support of Young Klondike on one side, and the Unknown on the other.

Dick and Edith were taken completely by surprise when Ned flung open the door and entered with the dripping stranger.

"Who in the world have you got there?" exclaimed the former springing to his feet.

"Don't ask me," said Ned. "Quick, Dick! Get the whisky! Edith, make a bed ready for this man! Mrs. Colvin, I'll trouble you to retire! Now, then, neighbor, we'll get off your wet clothes!"

It was high time if the man was to be saved from an attack of pneumonia, but Young Klondike could not have treated his own brother better than he did his unknown visitor on that stormy night.

With the help of Dick and the Unknown the man was soon stripped and rubbed down with dry towels, and a good dose of whisky administered.

He refused to go to bed, however, and when Edith and Mrs. Colvin were recalled, they found him in dry garments, seated comfortably in a big chair before the fire, looking the very picture of content.

"I'm sure I'm most awfully thankful for what you have done for me this night, boss," he said. "I s'pose I should be dead now if it wasn't for you two."

"You certainly were in a fair way toward it," replied Ned, "but now that you are feeling a little more comfortable, perhaps you will tell us who you are."

"A little more comfortable," cried the stranger. "Why, I'm just as comfortable as a bug in a rug. You want to know who I am, do you? Wall, mebbe you've heard tell of me, Young Klondike. They call me the 'Man in the Moon.'"

Now, if this statement had been made elsewhere and under other circumstances, Young Klondike and his friends might have been excused for thinking their guest a lunatic, but as it happened, Ned had often heard of this Man in the Moon.

"Oh, I know you!" he exclaimed. "Your name is Nat Trueman; you started a mine away up French Gulch last spring."

"Yes, I did," replied the stranger. "And because I took a notion to call that mine the Man in the Moon, the name has kinder got fastened to its owner, and that's me."

"Well, we are glad to see you, Mr. Trueman," said Ned. "How have you been making out with your mine?"

"Well, now, I've had Satan's own luck with it first and last," replied Trueman, "and that's what brought me down here. Says I to myself, I'll go to Young Klondike and ask him to help me out, and here I am and I want you to help me, boss; now don't say no, for I haven't got anybody else to appeal to, and if you don't help me the mine is lost."

"I'm sure I'm always willing to help out my neighbors," replied Ned. "But what's the trouble? What's the matter with the Man in the Moon?"

"Why it's just like this, boss," replied Trueman; "you see I started in there with a hundred dollars, which was blame soon sunk getting the shaft open, of course."

"Of course. A hundred dollars don't go far on the Klondike."

"You bet your sweet life it don't, but I made it do me till I got the shaft pretty well down to the bedrock, and I finished the job on tick and then struck gold and paid up."

"I heard that you had made a strike," said Ned. "Along about last June, was it not?"

"That was the time," replied Mr. Trueman, "but that there strike, gentlemen, did me blamed little good."

"What was the trouble?"

"Trouble enough. I took out about four thousand dollars' worth of dust, all in one lump, and then the blame thing petered out, and I had to start a new shaft which cost pretty nigh all I had before I got through with it, and then I struck it rich again."

"I heard something of that. You were taken sick then?"

"Yes, and I was mighty bad for a long time, and then I was robbed of everything I had, and then just as I began to get to work again the blame thing petered out a second time, and I had to go to work and try still another shaft."

"And struck it again?"

"Struck it again, you bet your sweet life, and richer than ever, and that was last week, and blamed if Dutch Heinrich's gang didn't swoop down on me and jump the claim!"

"Jump nothing!" cried Ned. "How can they jump a claim when a man is working on it?"

"Well, they jumped on me, at all events, boss, and locked me up in my own hut, and there they've been at work for the last few days scooping out gold by the bucketful. I watched my chance, and this morning I managed to make my escape. 'I'll go to Young Klondike and ask him to help me,' I says to myself. but I didn't get the chance to steal my own canoe till after dark; then I started down the creek in all the storm. I'm sick and tired of the Klondike. I want to go home."

"Hello! What do you mean by that?" asked Ned. "I thought you wanted us to help you?"

"So I do. Buy the Man in the Moon, boss, and you'll get a good one. You can easy run them fellers off. You've done the same thing before."

"Oh, I don't want to buy. We've got enough mines," replied Ned. "I'm ready to help you in any way I can, though."

Mr. Trueman seemed to be immensely disappointed. He was only a poor, ignorant fellow, who had been struggling along at his claim on French Gulch single handed and alone.

Ned had considerable more talk with him, and found that he was thoroughly disheartened.

After several vain attempts to sell his mine to Golden & Luckey, he suddenly turned and said:

"All right, gents, if you won't buy I can't make you, and between ourselves I think you are wise. This last shaft will only peter out same as the others have done. It's only a question of time. There's no big money in the Man in the Moon."

"By the Jumping Jeremiah, I like that," said the Unknown. "And yet you would have sold us the claim."

"Well, that's business, isn't it? I'm through. I want to get it off my hands."

"It isn't the way I do business," replied Ned, "not by a good deal. Still I suppose it's your style, Mr. Trueman, and I am not going to be too critical. I'm willing to help you all I can. Let me ask you a question or two."

"You can ask me a hundred if you wish."

"You say you have sunk three shafts on the Man in the Moon and each time struck gold and each time worked through the deposit; in other words the mine petered out."

"Two of 'em did. The other I've just struck. It hasn't petered out yet, but, of course it will."

"You take a gloomy view of it."

"Perhaps. You would if you had been through with what I have."

"Were these three shafts on a line with each other?"

"Yes."

"Was the gold deposit in the second at a lower level than in the first?"

"Yes."

"How far apart were the shafts?"

"About twenty feet."

"At what depth did you strike gold in the first?"

"Fifteen feet."

"Very close to the surface for this region, and in the second?"

"Twenty-two feet."

"Exactly, and in the third."

"Why, the third ran deep; it was on the twenty-nine foot level that I got the gold."

"I thought so; distance between the second and third shafts being about the same as between the first and second?"

"Just about."

Ned turned to Dick, who had been listening attentively, and remarked:

"Dick, I think we understand this matter perfectly well?"

"Of course," replied Dick.

"Look here, Mr. Trueman," said Ned, "how much of a claim is this Man in the Moon?"

"You mean how long?"

"Yes."

"Two hundred feet on French Gulch creek."

"What will you take for the second hundred feet?"

"Why, it isn't worth much the way things stand.

I'll sell the first hundred feet for ten thousand. All I want to do is to pull up stakes and go home."

"I won't buy that way, but I tell you what I will do, I'll take the second hundred feet for ten thousand, providing we strike gold."

"I'll do it, or rather I would in a minute if I had any guarantee that I wouldn't be killed by Dutch Heinrich's gang. I suppose, of course, you wouldn't think of going to work before spring."

"On the contrary, we'll go to work now."

"Well, then, I'll sell you the whole claim for ten thousand dollars, and never go back there at all."

"No," said Ned, decidedly. "I won't do that. In buying the way I propose to buy I run no risk and I guarantee that you shall run none, for we will protect you. My opinion is that in the Man in the Moon you have a rich claim and one well worth working. If I do give you ten thousand dollars for the second hundred feet it will be because the first hundred feet is worth half a million—don't you forget that."

"I see! I see!" cried Trueman. "You think the gold sheet dips."

"Exactly. Do you accept my offer?"

"Yes. I'll accept any offer Young Klondike can make to me."

"Let's see your papers then. If your claim to the Man in the Moon is all right we'll draw the thing right up in black and white and make a start for French Gulch as soon as morning dawns."

The next half hour was spent in studying Trueman's papers and making preparations for a journey up the creek, for the documents were found to be quite correct. There was no doubt about the claim of Nat Trueman to the mine known as the Man in the Moon.

"Don't you think you are acting rather hastily, dear boy?" asked the Unknown, after Trueman had been persuaded to go to bed, and he and Dick and Ned sat by the fire listening to the pelting of the rain against the window panes.

"Not at all," replied Ned. "I'm all right on this matter, I guess."

"You usually are," said Dick. "I'm willing to follow your lead wherever you may go."

"Of course I am," said the Unknown. "That cuts no ice one way or the other, but why do you want to muss with a matter like this? Here we are all snug and comfortable and everything booming at the Young Klondike, and now you want to go piking off up French Gulch to tackle a mine you don't know anything about, and what is worse, one already in the hands of claim jumpers. I say that's buying trouble ready made."

"And I say it's buying into a sure thing without putting up one cent of cash," laughed Ned. "Look here, do you admit that I know something about mining as it is done here on the Klondike?"

"Of course you do, dear boy. None better."

"Very well; then I tell you that where the gold sheet dips like that there is always good pickings to be had; you'll find it so with the Man in the Moon."

Now, in order to make Young Klondike's reasoning

clear we must pause to explain something of the conditions under which gold is found in the Klondike region.

Free gold occurs in two ways.

By free gold we mean gold which is not chemically united with any other metal, as is very often the case.

First it occurs loose in sand in the form of flakes, or fine dust or nuggets.

Second it occurs imbedded in white quartz rock, and the rock has to be crushed in order to separate it from the gold.

Gold is found in pretty much every form in the Klondike country, but by far the greater part of it occurs loose in the sand.

Sometimes it is taken from the beds of creeks or out of old water courses where the sand lies exposed, but in the majority of cases it is necessary to dig to get it, for vegetable mold and clay and other deposits have accumulated over the golden sands in the course of ages.

It is not often that one can pick up gold on the surface of the ground.

Now, by all miners it is said of the Klondike that in no part of the world, unless possibly it is South Africa, is gold found so widely and evenly distributed.

It seems to underlie the top soil in one immense sheet, extending through all the valleys which open off from the Yukon, the Klondike and other smaller streams.

The average depth at which this great gold sheet can be struck is twenty feet, but in some instances it seems to run like the waves of the sea, and is found higher or lower, as the case may be.

Young Klondike knew this perfectly well, and figured on it in his talk with the Man in the Moon.

He saw that Mr. Trueman had begun work on one side of one of these great gold waves, if it may be so termed.

For this reason in each shaft that he started the gold was found lower down.

This would continue until the lowest point of the wave or dip was reached, and there, if Young Klondike's theory was correct, the depth at which gold might be looked for would steadily decrease until the top of the next wave was reached.

We hope we have made this plain. To Young Klondike and Dick it was entirely so, and they felt certain that in starting in on the "extension" of the Man in the Moon, they would be pretty certain to strike gold at a moderate depth, and very likely find a much deeper deposit than Nat Trueman had struck.

To the Unknown it was not so plain; he would never study mining, and very often would scarcely listen to the explanations of Young Klondike, who was studying all the time; but on the other hand he was perfectly willing to go into anything that Ned approved of, and accordingly, next morning, found all hands making ready for a trip to the Man in the Moon.

CHAPTER III.

HOW YOUNG KLONDIKE KILLED THE BEAR.

A TRIP up to the head waters of El Dorado creek and on into French Gulch is nothing wonderful in pleasant weather, but with the coming of the winter in the Klondike country all travel is difficult and dangerous.

This little trip, however, would not have caused Young Klondike a thought if it had not been for the swollen condition of El Dorado creek.

"What do you think, Dick?" he said next morning when he and Dick walked down on the wharf together. "Will it be safe to take the launch up the creek in the present condition of affairs?"

"There's no other way of getting up there unless we go overland," replied Dick, "and that would be a long, hard pull."

"And wouldn't do at all. What we want to do is to drop in on Dutch Heinrich's gang, suddenly. Trueman says there are only about a dozen of them, and I think we five ought to be able to drive them off the ground."

"I know what you think," said Dick, "they are only a lot of drunken cowards, who know very well that we can bring down every honest man on El Dorado creek and French Gulch upon them if we choose; you are figuring on that. You think they will turn and run at the mere sight of us, and I agree with you; still I think it would be safer to take some of the men along."

"But we can't, Dick. The launch won't hold any more than our party if we mean to take a supply of provisions with us, which, of course, we must do, and I'm sure we never could succeed in getting the boats up the creek until the water falls."

"Settled," said Dick. "I am with you under those circumstances; of course we must take the launch."

"We may have to leave it up there all winter."

"Possibly. If anything happens to it we must build another, that's all."

"Then we go?"

"Yes."

"Here comes Edith; I'll just talk it over with her, you know. She went to bed last night before we decided on this step."

"She'll want to go, too, of course."

"Of course I shall!" exclaimed Edith, "who was near enough to overhear the remark. "Good-morning, boys! What's in the wind now? I think I can guess. You mean to work the Man in the Moon, and don't you think of leaving me behind. I won't stand it. If I don't go in the launch I shall walk."

This was ever Edith's way. She was always ready for any new venture, and the more dangerous and venturesome it was the better she liked it, so it would seem.

Hearing the story of Ned's deal with Mr. Trueman Edith highly approved of it and immediate preparations were made for the start.

"HANDSOME HARRY."

The handsome naphtha launch, which was the pride of young Klondike's heart, was taken out of its winter house, and such provisions and firearms as were needed loaded in.

Mr. Trueman was immensely pleased with the prospect.

"This gives me fresh courage," he said, as they started up the creek. "I begin to think that after all I shall make something out of the Man in the Moon."

The storm was all over now, and the sun shone brightly, while the temperature was as warm as a day in spring.

It was expected to reach the headwaters of El Dorado creek by nightfall, or rather, the point where it emerges from French Gulch.

Here it was intended to tie up for the night at a hut which Young Klondike had built some time before in connection with some prospecting which he had done.

It was five miles further up the creek to the Man in the Moon, and the run could have been made in the dark well enough, but Ned thought it would be injudicious to come upon Dutch Heinrich's gang that way.

"We want to give them a scare," he said. "We want to fix it so that we can strike one hard blow and do the business. Then they will let us alone, and we can take our time working the Man in the Moon."

It grew dark about four o'clock at that season, and a little before that time they reached the hut.

A busy half hour followed.

Ned had concluded not to attempt to run the launch up the Gulch at all, as here the water, he knew from past experience, would fall rapidly and there was almost a certainty of its being grounded, so everything had to be unpacked and stored in the hut, to be carried up to the Man in the Moon later on.

"Now, Mr. Trueman," said Young Klondike, after all this was done and they had eaten dinner, "we want you to stay here and guard these goods. Perhaps you may see us back before morning and perhaps not, but we shall certainly be back soon after daylight. If Dutch Heinrich comes he must see nothing suspicious. If he should show signs of hanging around here, you will slip away and come up the gulch to meet us; never mind the goods in that case. It's not likely he will find them, and if he does it can't be helped."

Now, this announcement on Ned's part took Mr. Trueman entirely by surprise, for he had made certain that Young Klondike's party intended to remain in the hut all night.

The launch had been drawn up out of the creek and was concealed in a small cave, which opened into the left hand wall of the gulch.

As for the provisions and other goods they were all placed in so secure a hiding place, that it was hardly possible that anyone could find them, for the fact was there were two floors to this hut, with a space of two

feet between them. This hiding hole had been built by Young Klondike at the time the hut was erected for the purpose of concealing gold.

"What's your plan?" asked Trueman. "I don't want to stay here alone."

"Our plan is to drive off your enemies. We have our own way of working these things, and it suits us to do this job in the dark; but if you are afraid to stay here alone, of course, we must take you along."

But Mr. Trueman was a perfectly reasonable sort of fellow and no coward. He saw that he was not wanted on this night expedition and he immediately consented to stay behind.

At half past eight Young Klondike, Dick, Edith and the Unknown started up along the bank of the creek.

"Good-by, Trueman!" called out Ned. "We'll clear the way for you! By this time to-morrow we shall all be working the Man in the Moon."

"By the Jumping Jeremiah, I suppose that fellow thinks we are crazy!" chuckled the Unknown, as they walked on.

"Perhaps we are," replied Ned, "but I think my scheme will work. It's lucky I've seen this hut up at the Man in the Moon or I—I mean you—would never have thought of the plan."

"You'd better correct yourself and give me credit for what rightfully belongs to me!" cried the detective; "the idea is all mine and you know it perfectly well."

"I own it's yours. Didn't I say so?"

"Yes, but you began to say something else."

"Quit quarreling, boys, quit quarreling," exclaimed Edith. "What if the scheme don't work? Whose idea will it be then!"

"Still mine!" cried the Unknown. "I'm honest enough to admit failure when it comes, but it isn't coming this trip, for as sure as my name is——"

"What? Why do you stop?" exclaimed Dick, as the Unknown suddenly paused.

"Yes, go on. Don't stop there!" cried Edith. "Finish out your sentence, Zed."

"He's stuck," said Ned. "Fact of the matter is it is so long since he has mentioned his name that he has forgotten what it is."

"—— not McGinty," said the Unknown, gravely. "There, my sentence is finished. Sold again! You don't catch me this time, but I'll own up, boys and girls, I almost told my name."

"Finish the job," said Edith. "Come, now, be good and tell it. Who can say but what there may be a fight and I might be killed. You would feel sorry then that you had not granted my simple request."

"Stop it, stop it, Edith!" cried Ned. "I won't have even the suggestion of such a thing. There's going to be no failure, though. I know Dutch Heinrich well; he's a perfect coward if there ever was one. He'll run first fire—you'll see!"

As we have already mentioned, it was about five miles up to the Man in the Moon, and our travelers

had covered three of these when an adventure occurred which we must stop to relate.

The creek here although narrow was running very fast. It was perhaps four or five feet deep, and on the other side were broken cliffs, not very high just here, although they rose again further back and kept on rising by a series of terraces until they joined the mountain range.

The Unknown was ahead and had just turned a bend in the gulch, when all at once Ned heard him give a startled cry.

"What's the matter?" he called, springing forward, and he almost ran into the arms of the Unknown, who came darting back.

"Some one on the rocks, dear boy," he whispered. "Lay low."

"I thought I heard a noise just before you hol-tered," said Dick. "Why didn't you keep your mouth shut? Then we would have had a chance at them, but now they know we are here."

"By the Jumping Jeremiah, how could I keep my mouth shut when one of them threw a big stone down at me; didn't you hear it drop?"

"No one threw that stone," said Ned, decisively. "I know by the way it struck the water that it dropped of itself."

By this time they were all around the bend and stood staring over at the cliffs on the other side of the creek.

It was very dark and they could see nothing, but they could distinctly hear strange scuffling sounds, and all at once a lot of loose rock came flying down into the creek.

"We'd better get out of this!" breathed Dick. "It isn't safe here."

"Hold on," said Ned. "We won't be in a hurry. I want to understand what this means."

"It don't sound to me like a man," said Edith. "If it was he surely must see us. What little light there is strikes full upon us here in the gulch."

"Hist, hist!" whispered the Unknown. "There's something moving up there on that ledge."

"Can you see anything?" asked Edith, raising her rifle.

"Not a thing now. I thought I saw something a second ago."

Bang! Bang!

Suddenly Young Klondike flung up his rifle and fired two shots.

There was a curious, cry, a snapping, snarling sound, and down off the rocks tumbled a big black bear, landing directly in the creek, while another fully as large went shuffling off along the ledge and disappeared around a turn in the rocks.

CHAPTER IV.

THE BOLD ATTACK ON THE HUT.

"A BIG black bear!" cried the Unknown. "By the Jumping Jeremiah, a big black bear!"

"And his brother!" laughed Edith. "Upon my word, I must congratulate you upon your shooting, Ned. I didn't see the first one, and before I could get a shot at the second he was gone."

"Look out! He's coming!" cried Dick. "We want him if we can get him, but I don't believe we can."

The bear had evidently been shot dead, and the carcass, slowly sinking, was now coming down the creek.

How to intercept it was a problem, and one which the Unknown solved in rather a unique way.

Over on the other side of the creek, which here was not more than five feet wide, lay a big fragment of rock which had fallen down from the cliffs above.

The Unknown sprang across the creek and exerting all his strength succeeded in tumbling this rock into the water.

It just did the business, for although the bear sank, the carcass lodged against it and there remained.

"A good shot," said Edith, "he's dead, sure enough. I'm going up the creek after his brother. You can join me when you get him out."

"Just the chance we want, and get him out we will!" cried Ned, as soon as Edith had disappeared around the turn in the gulch.

Then in spite of the water to say nothing of the atmosphere Ned proceeded to take off his clothes.

"Phew! It makes my teeth chatter to look at you!" exclaimed the Unknown. "Ye gods and little fishes! I wouldn't do that for a farm."

"I'd do it for a bear," laughed Dick, proceeding to follow Ned's example.

"And I forbear," chuckled the Unknown.

"Bad pun," said Ned, who was now undressed. "You ought to be punished for that."

"I'll take my punishment out of the shivers it gives me to see you fellows go into that water," laughed the detective. "Careful now! Don't get yourselves into any snarl. I don't believe you can lift the bear."

"Of course, we can't. We might just as well try to lift the side of a house," replied Ned, "but we can drag him out all right, I guess; here, Dick, take hold of the other hind paw! Phew! isn't it cold? I'd rather be head under than to stand around this way."

And duck head under Young Klondike actually did, although the temperature of the water was but a little above freezing, and with Dick's help managed to pull the bear ashore.

He was a tremendously big fellow, as black as black could be; Ned had shot him through the heart.

By the time the boys got their clothes on Edith came back rather discouraged.

"I was determined to get a shot at the bear's brother," she said, "but I guess we shall never see anything more of him."

"Never mind the brother; what are we going to do with the bear?" asked the Unknown.

"Take him along with us as a present to Dutch

Heinrich," laughed Ned. "What else would we do with him?"

"Well, you'll do the carrying—I'm out."

"Seriously," said Edith, "we ought to hide him; there's lots of good eating there, and we may want it before we are through."

"We'll bury him," said Ned. "Make a cache so the wolves can't get at him; indeed I don't know but the bear's brother might like to tackle him. Are bears cannibals, do you know, Zed?"

"Really I don't, and I can't bear to think of it," replied the detective, and after such a wicked pun as this, Ned could only give him up as incorrigible, and they proceeded to cache the bear.

Choosing a spot where the shelving rocks would protect the carcass in a measure, they heaped stones over it until it was entirely covered.

"There!" exclaimed Ned. "Wolves may get the scent, but I don't believe they can turn over those stones."

They started forward then and soon covered the remaining miles which lay between them and the Man in the Moon.

It was about eleven o'clock when they came in sight of the shaft house and the rude hut which Mr. Trueman had constructed for himself.

This stood up against the cliffs and the shaft house was on the narrow stretch of level ground which lay between it and the creek.

"It's just the very spot for a good claim," remarked Ned. "I believe the whole of French Gulch offers good diggings to anyone who will take the trouble to go deep enough. You see there has been an awful lot of debris washed down here in times past, but the gold sheet underlies it just the same."

"There's a light in the window there," remarked Dick. "It looks as if Dutch Heinrich was up and dressed."

"Stop a minute now before we talk about our plan," said the Unknown. "I want to study the lay of the land."

"It's just right," said Ned. "You see my memory of the situation was perfect. On that shelf, right above the hut, is the place."

"For you?"

"No, sir! Not much! For you and Edith."

"I could never think of it. In that case you and Dick would run all the risk and I have all the fun."

"It's settled," said Ned, firmly. "How would it look for me to leave Dick and go up there on the rocks? I could never think of such a thing."

"Ned is right," said Edith, quietly. "The post of danger belongs to him."

"Stand where you are," said the detective. "I'm going to look into this situation a bit. I will take some of the danger and you can't stop me."

They let him go and quietly waited.

Stealing up to the hut, the Unknown peered in through the window, remaining there for as much as five minutes.

When he came back he reported that a game of poker was in progress inside.

"How many fellows did you see in there?" asked Ned.

"I could only make out six."

"Dutch Heinrich with them?"

"Yes; he's in the game with three others. There were two fellows sitting by the fire smoking. There may be others, but if there are, I couldn't see them, as I said."

"We'd better tackle them through the window, hadn't we?"

"Decidedly. We want them to retreat up the gulch and not down."

"Very good. I'm ready any time. Now, then, the cue is surrender, Dutch?"

"O. K. Come, Edith, we'll get ready to do our act."

It was decidedly a bold scheme which the Unknown had conceived; in fact, it was its very boldness which made Young Klondike feel certain of its success.

The Unknown and Edith proceeded to ascend the rocks, Ned and Dick watching until they saw them take their places on the rocky shelf immediately above the hut.

Here their forms looked dim and shadowy, for although it was a bright, starlight night, the gloom of the gulch was great.

"Shall we move, Dick?" asked Ned. "This seems to be the appointed time."

"I'm all ready."

"Come on, then. One bold stroke and it's all over. I don't doubt for an instant that we shall succeed."

They stole up under the window and peered through the dingy panes.

A big burly German with a pipe in his mouth sat at the head of the table dealing the cards; the three with him in the game seemed to be half drunk and decidedly sleepy; one of the two the Unknown had seen smoking now lay stretched out by the fire apparently sound asleep.

"Now!" whispered Young Klondike. "Now!"

He and Dick raised their rifles together and drove them straight through the window panes.

"Get out of that hut or you're dead men!" shouted Ned. "Get out and dust! Surrender, Dutch!"

At the first crash of glass all hands sprang up, Dutch Heinrich overturning the table in his haste.

Bang, bang!

Ned and Dick instantly fired, and in the same moment a great rock was sent flying down from the shelf by Edith and the Unknown.

It came crashing through the roof with a thunderous noise, but it found no one to damage inside.

Dutch Heinrich and his men probably thought that half the miners on El Dorado creek were after them, for they burst out of the door at the first fire, and ran off up the gulch as fast as their legs could carry them.

CHAPTER V.

HOW YOUNG KLONDIKE CAPTURED THE BEAR.

"FIRE! Let them have all the cartridges in our rifles, Dick!"

It was a wise move.

The boys blazed away from the ground, and Edith and the Unknown did the same thing from the rocks above.

There was no intention of hitting anybody and no effort made to do so; the idea was to make Dutch Heinrich think that a big force was at his heels, and it worked to a charm.

In less time than it takes to tell it the enemy had vanished, and Young Klondike's party had the Man in the Moon to themselves.

"By the Jumping Jeremiah, that was done pretty slick!" exclaimed the Unknown, as he came down off the rocks. "Have they all gone, dear boy? And how many of them did you make? Was I right in saying six?"

"I counted seven," said Ned. "My, how they did run!"

"Anybody hit by the stone?" asked Edith. "I felt awfully afraid there would be."

"Nobody," replied Ned. "They were half out before it fell, and when they heard the crash you ought to have seen them stampede. High and mighty Unknown, I must congratulate you on your perspicacity. Nothing could have worked out better than your plan."

"On my which?"

"I never sell my cabbages twice. Big words are scarce up here in the Klondike, and they come high."

"It's all right anyhow," said Dick. "We've got rid of them mighty easy if they don't come back again."

"That we must take our chances on," replied Ned, "and if they should come down upon us suddenly the consequences might be unpleasant, which being the case I have a plan to propose."

"Which is what?" asked the detective. "Out with it, dear boy."

"That we quietly abandon this place and go back and skin the bear."

"That would be a kind of skin game, wouldn't it?"

"Now, now! At it again?"

"But what's the idea?"

"To give 'em a chance to come back if they want to; then we'll pop in on them suddenly and give them another dose, and if we find they are not back when we return, we may feel pretty well assured that they do not mean to come now."

After a moment's reflection the Unknown pronounced in favor of this plan.

"I like it," he said. "It will keep them in the dark as to our actual strength, but we'll just hold on a moment and see if they are anywhere around."

They waited, watched and listened, but could dis-

cover no trace of the enemy, so at last they started back down the Gulch, and in due time reached the cached bear.

It was undisturbed under the stones and they could see nothing to indicate that the wolves had been at it.

Ned and Dick got out their big knives and went right to work on the skin, which they removed with the greatest care.

"There, Edith! That's yours for a rug!" exclaimed Ned, when it was off at last; "now, for our breakfast. Where's the Unknown?"

"Gone back to the hut."

"Confound him! I knew he would do that."

"He thought it would be safer to have one of us on the watch; you and Dick were so busy with the bear-skin that he didn't want to disturb you; he promised to be most careful, and upon no account to attack the enemy, even if they come."

"We must follow him at once," declared Ned, "or he'll be certain to get into some snarl or another. Dick, we won't wait to cut up the bear."

"We might wait just for the leg," said Dick. "We must have our breakfast out of it anyhow. We can put the rest of the meat back in the cache and come for it later on."

So the right hind leg was cut off and Ned shouldered it, and they all started back for the hut.

Before they had gone half way they saw the Unknown coming toward them.

"Hello!" he cried. "Is the butcher coming? By the Jumping Jeremiah, I'm as hungry as a bear!"

"Then I bear on my shoulders that which should satisfy your hunger," said Ned. "Don't drop dead. You've been punishing me with bad puns all night, and you must bear with mine. What did you run away and leave us for? Don't you know it's against the rules?"

"Oh, I felt that I must be doing something," replied the detective. "I went up to the hut to see if there was any sign of the enemy, but there wasn't. I think we may safely say we've won the battle, and as the laborer is worthy of his hire, I propose that we have breakfast before we do that five mile walk back."

This suggestion was received with general favor, and they hurried on to the hut.

Ned and Dick hustled around, got wood and built a roaring fire on the hearth, while Edith prepared the bear meat for roasting and the Unknown stopped up the holes in the window panes with some old rags, drew water from the creek and attended to the chores generally, including the setting of the table with such articles of crockery as he could find.

"Can't fix that hole in the roof very well," he said. "No matter, it will let the smoke out. Now, then, there's no use in all hands sitting up to watch this roast. It only needs one to turn the spit and one to watch, so what's the matter with the other two having a sleep?"

"Which means that you want to be one of the two," replied Ned. "I'm agreeable—fire away!"

"It does. I feel unusually tired, but of course you will wake me at the slightest alarm."

Edith positively refused to leave her cooking, and as neither Ned nor Dick were much inclined to sleep, it was only the Unknown who took to the bunk.

Bear meat roasts slowly and this seemed to be particularly slow, and the sun rose just as it was done.

Ned hastened to wake up the Unknown, and after all hands had enjoyed a wash-up in the creek, they sat down to breakfast.

"Who'll do the carving?" asked Edith. "I've done the cooking, and one of you boys must cut the meat."

"That's Young Klondike's business," said the Unknown. "He's at the head of this expedition, and must do the family act."

"Indeed I shan't," replied Ned. "That belongs to the oldest of the party every time."

"Which means me?"

"Is there any doubt about that?"

"I suppose I must acknowledge it, though I feel as young as any of you. Here, give me the knife and fork. Phew! What am I expected to do with this thing? Call that a knife? I might just as well try to carve with a stick; but no matter. I'll do my best."

"Stand up to it like a man, Zed!" cried Dick. "You can't carve sitting down."

"It's tough that a fellow can't even do the family act without interference," said the Unknown, good-naturedly. "No matter; anything to oblige."

He stood up and went at it again, the roast slipping around the dish and the gravy spattering right and left.

"Hold on there! Hold on! You'll ruin my dress!" said Edith, drawing back.

"Ye gods and little fishes, but this bear is a tough one!" cried the Unknown, wrestling with the carving knife and fork.

Just then a low growl was heard above, and to the astonishment of all, there was a big black head looking down at them through the hole in the roof.

"Look! Look!" cried Young Klondike. "It's the other bear! He has come to avenge his brother's death."

A low growl was the answer, and there was a great scrambling on the roof.

Young Klondike and Edith made a rush for their rifles, but before they could get them the bear was gone.

Abandoning the breakfast all ran outside and could see the bear shuffling over the ledges. It had been an easy matter for him to step across on the roof from the rocks. Ned threw up his rifle and was just about to fire when the bear suddenly stopped and looked back at him with an expression so human that somehow he could not make up his mind to shoot.

The delay was fatal, for an instant later the bear turned a corner of the rocks and disappeared.

"Why in the world didn't you shoot him, Ned?" cried Edith. "What's the matter with you anyhow?"

"Why didn't you shoot yourself?" demanded Ned, somewhat abashed. "You had your rifle ready as well as I."

"Upon my word I don't know why I didn't," said Edith. "He gave me one look and to save me I couldn't fire after that."

"Same with me."

"Know what I think?" put in the Unknown.

"I'm always glad to know what you think, so let's have it," said Ned.

"That bear has been tamed."

"No!"

"Now I'm telling you."

"Impossible here in the Klondike."

"No more impossible here than anywhere else. Some fellow has caught him when he was a cub and tamed him, and later on he got away and took to the woods again."

"Hello!" cried Dick. "Evidently you are acquainted with our friend, the bear."

"To blazes with the bear—that's where the other one went, the hind leg at least. What about breakfast? Are we to let it spoil?"

As no one wanted to do that they all returned to the hut and went to work with good appetites, soon demolishing the best part of the bear meat.

Breakfast over, the programme for the day was the next thing in order. "I'll go back and fetch up True-man," said the Unknown, "and we'll both bring a load of goods with us, that is if you are not afraid to stay here without my valuable protection."

Ned laughed at the idea, and approving of the Unknown's plan the detective started back down the gulch.

Young Klondike now went to work to make a thorough inspection of the property known as the Man in the Moon.

First of all, they made a careful examination of the hut to see if the gold taken out by Dutch Heinrich could be discovered.

No trace of it was found, and Ned came to the conclusion that some of the party had carried it off to the usual haunts of the gang immediately after the clearing up of the big storm.

"That would account for our finding only six of them here," said Dick. "I'm afraid they will come back full force later on."

"No borrowing trouble," replied Edith. "Come, now, boys. I'm anxious to know what this wonderful diggings amounts to. Suppose we get right down to business and examine the shafts?"

"Just what I was going to propose," said Ned. "We'll take them in order and begin with No. 1."

The windlass and tub had been removed from shaft No. 1, and it was the same with No. 2, but by the aid of a rope which they found in the hut, Dick and Edith

were able to lower Young Klondike down into both shafts, and a careful examination was made in each case.

"I'm sure I'm right," remarked Ned, after he came up out of No. 2. "Those two shafts have been sunk in the side of a big dip in the gold sheet; there is no chance of finding any big deposit there unless one drifts on the line of the dip which would be troublesome and expensive. It wouldn't surprise me a bit if I found that Dutch Heinrich's gang had already worked through the deposit which Nat Trueman struck in No. 3."

And this proved to be exactly the state of the case. When Ned got down into No. 3, he found that the depth of the gold deposit was about four feet. It was easy to distinguish the line of the golden sands where they entered the shaft, and where they passed out of it on the other side at a little lower level.

We hope we have made this plain to the reader; it was very plain to Young Klondike.

He felt perfectly certain that a deep shaft, say forty to fifty feet sunk in a certain hollow a short distance beyond No. 3 would produce rich results.

He based his conclusion on the idea that the formation of the top soil to a certain extent resembled the dip of the golden sands below, all of which he carefully explained to Dick and Edith when he came up out of shaft No. 3.

"Does our two hundred feet take in that hollow, or don't it?" asked Dick.

"If it does I shall move our line forward," replied Ned. "That hollow is going to prove Nat Trueman's salvation, and I want him to have it. I wouldn't wrong the man for the world. We will go on further and try to catch the gold sheet on its next rise. If I can make my calculations right, we ought to hit it within fifteen feet of the surface. This will be a good test of how much there is in my theory."

"Tell us how many feet from the hollow you would sink our shaft," said Edith.

Ned took out his memorandum book and did some figuring.

"I should say a hundred and twenty-six feet," he answered at last.

"What do you base your calculations on?" asked Edith.

"On the angle of the dip, as seen in the three shafts."

"That's all Greek to me."

"Suppose we measure off our hundred and twenty-six feet?" said Dick. "It will take us among that clump of scrub cedars, if I don't mistake."

Ned produced the small tape line which they usually carried with them, and began his measuring, with Dick's help.

As they came up out of the hollow and neared the clump of cedars all were startled by a deep growl.

"The bear!" exclaimed Edith.

"There's something among the cedars there, that is sure," whispered Ned. "Quiet now. If it's the bear we must bag him."

Young Klondike raised his rifle and slowly advanced toward the cedars.

"Well, well! Look here!" they heard him shout a moment later.

Down went the rifle and Ned plunged in among the cedars, Dick and Edith following. There with his foot caught in a trap was the big black bear which had looked in at them through the hole in the roof, or at least one enough like him to be his twin brother.

"It's the bear! They've been setting a trap for him!" cried Ned. "Look at the poor brute! Upon my word he seems to be appealing to me to set him free."

"Better shoot him and put him out of his misery," said Dick.

"Do you know I can't do it—I just can't. Hear him whine! It almost seems as if he was trying to talk."

"I wouldn't shoot him, either," said Edith. "Go up to him, Ned. I'll keep him covered. We'll see how he acts. I declare I'm almost a-mind to believe that the Unknown is right and that the bear has been tamed."

"I'll try it," said Ned, courageously. "Keep him covered, Edith. If he shows the least disposition to attack me fire, only look out you don't shoot me."

As Ned approached the bear the imprisoned animal began whining like a dog.

Ned held out his hand and walked boldly up to him, the bear began licking his hand, whining appealingly, as much as to say:

"I'll be good if you'll set me free."

"I declare he is tame!" exclaimed Ned. "I don't believe we run any risk in setting him free."

"Try it," said Dick, coming up. "He's only a young bear anyhow, big as he is; I'm sure I'm right about that."

"Here goes!" cried Ned. "Shoot him if he makes a rush at us, Edith, but if he starts away let him go."

Now the last was precisely what Young Klondike expected the bear to do, but he was entirely mistaken.

Bending down he opened the jaws of the trap and set the imprisoned animal free, but he did not jump back or pull away, but just stood there watching to see what the bear would do.

The first thing bruin did was to lie down and roll like a dog.

Then it licked its wounded hind paw, which was a good deal lacerated; then all at once it rose on its hind legs and stood like a man extending its fore paw to Ned.

"Upon my word! Why, he wants to thank you!" cried Edith. "He wants to shake hands."

Ned seized the proffered paw and gave it a hearty shake. "It's plain enough to see that this bear has been tamed," he said. "How are you, old fellow! Come up to the hut with us and we'll give you something to eat and I'll doctor your sore foot."

Did the bear comprehend?

It certainly seemed so. When Ned started off to-

"HANDSOME HARRY."

ward the hut the bear dropped on all fours and came limping after him like a big dog.

CHAPTER VI.

GOLD WASHING IN THE GULCH.

"UPON my word, Ned, he seems to know all you say to him!" exclaimed Dick, when a little later they found themselves at the door of the hut with Young Klondike's big black bear.

"He's been very carefully trained," replied Ned. "Here's a mascot, Dick. Why, I wouldn't take five hundred dollars for my bear."

The bear sat on the ground wagging his big head and staring at Young Klondike.

Without showing the least sign of fear or the slightest disposition to be ugly, he had just followed them back to the hut.

"He's asking you why you don't redeem your promise and give him something to eat," said Edith.

"Yes, and dress his sore foot," added Dick.

It was certainly very strange, but, of course, it was nothing but a coincidence; at that very moment the bear began licking his wounded paw and to look appealingly at Ned.

"Let me see your paw, Jack," cried Ned, holding out his hand.

The bear tilted himself over on one side, and thrust out his wounded paw.

"Wonderful!" cried Edith.

"It's just amazing," said Dick. "This bear has been some miner's pet and has escaped."

"Bring some water from the creek," said Ned. "There's sand in this wound. I'd just like to see if he'll let me wash it out."

Dick brought the water, and the bear submitted to the operation without the least objection; indeed, as Ned bent over him he licked his hair and neck.

"Stop that, you rascal! You tickle me!" cried Ned. "This foot is not very badly cut. I wonder if he would let me put a rag around it. Would you, Jack?"

But that was just what Jack would not do, for when Ned tried it he promptly tore the rag off with his teeth.

He was as tame as a kitten and ate bread out of Edith's hand and any number of crackers.

Thinking that he might like meat they tried him on a piece of roast bear, but Jack would have none of it.

He sniffed it and turned his head away.

"What shall we do with him?" exclaimed Edith at last. "Master Jack is taking up all our time. There is none too much daylight left."

"We might tie him up in the hut," suggested Dick.

"It wouldn't be the slightest use," replied Ned. "He'd break any rope we've got here; I tell you I'm just going to leave Jack free to do what he likes. If

he wants to stay here he can stay, and if he don't he can go, it all depends on his own sweet will."

"And we go back to our measuring?" asked Dick.

"Exactly. I'd like to know whether it was Dutch Heinrich who set that trap or whether it was True-man. I have an idea that Jack may belong to our friend, the Man in the Moon."

They now returned to the cedars. Jack did not attempt to follow, but just sat there at the door of the hut looking after them. The last they saw of him he was still licking his wounded paw.

Ned and Dick took the tape line and went at it again, and to their surprise found that the bear trap was exactly one hundred and twenty-six feet from the point where they started to measure.

"There! what do you say to that?" cried Ned. "Who'll dare to tell me that Jack is not a mascot now?"

He had scarcely spoken when there was a crashing behind them among the cedars, and in rushed a big black bear.

It was Jack! Edith involuntarily clutched her rifle, but Young Klondike motioned to her to put it down.

He wanted to see what the bear would do, for it was perfectly evident that Jack had no idea of attacking them.

The bear seized the trap in his teeth and shook it, and then threw it from him savagely.

Then he began scratching up the ground where it had been lying.

Probably his only idea was to destroy the scent of the thing, but Ned cried out:

"There! There's a lucky omen for you! Jack says dig the shaft right there, and I tell you I wouldn't change that position for a thousand dollars!"

There was not much chance for Jack to dig, however, as the ground was frozen pretty hard.

After scratching away for a few moments he gave it up, and sat down on the spot and held out his paw for Ned to shake, and there they left him when they returned to the hut.

"Jack is our mascot," declared Ned, "and I wouldn't tie him up for anything. He can follow us, or he can go away just as he likes, but in that place our shaft shall certainly be sunk."

Now, sinking a shaft on the Klondike country is no easy matter at any time of the year, for there the ground is always frozen down to a certain point.

This has its disadvantages, of course, but Young Klondike was well used to this sort of thing.

It was his intention then to begin cutting down the cedars next morning and to start his fire about noon. He figured it in his own mind that it would take between three and four days to sink the shaft down to the twenty foot level where he felt perfectly certain that he would find gold.

Of course he could have begun work then and there, but he had other plans for the afternoon.

It was now dinner time and the Unknown had not

returned with Mr. Trueman, as they had expected he would by this time.

Still it was a ten mile tramp for the detective and the way was rough, so there was nothing to be alarmed at.

Not caring to wait dinner, Edith fixed up a substantial meal, using the remains of the bear meat and the bread and canned goods, which they found in the hut.

Whether these belonged to Nat Trueman or to Dutch Heinrich, they did not know, but they helped themselves freely to them, and when dinner was over the boys each took a pan, a pick and a shovel and went down to the creek.

It was some time since Young Klondike had panned in the creek which ran through French Gulch, and he had never tried it at this particular point.

After a big rain there is apt to be more or less gold in the shape of small nuggets washed down most of the creeks in the Klondike country, so the boys felt almost certain of making a good day's wages, and if fortune should happen to favor them, they might make a good deal more.

"Wonder what's become of Jack?" remarked Dick, as they walked toward the cedars, for they had seen nothing of the bear since they left him sitting on the place where the trap had been.

"He's not there now," said Edith, looking ahead.

"He'll turn up again, you may be certain," said Ned. "The Unknown was entirely right. That bear is tame, and he'll never forget that I attended to his wounded paw."

They passed through the clump of cedars but saw nothing of Jack, and then coming down to the bank of the creek stopped to make a survey.

Conditions had changed very much since the day before.

Just as Young Klondike anticipated, the water had fallen rapidly.

Right ahead of them was a place where the creek had worn a deep channel for itself between the banks, and on the left—that is, the side where they stood—a rush of water down from the cliffs had opened a deep gully in the frozen soil.

This gully had a depth of just about twenty feet—eighteen and three quarters by actual measurement in the deepest place—and Young Klondike saw at a glance that he had made a great discovery, for the gully was not a dozen yards away from the place where it was proposed to sink the shaft, and here was a chance to test the soil at the required depth.

"There! What do you say to that?" he cried. "Here's a shaft ready made for us! Isn't Jack a mascot? I tell you this is all owing to my big black bear."

"If there is any gold down at the level we talked about it ought to show here," said Dick. "This is down right luck and no mistake."

There was still some water running through the gully, but as the boys were both provided with strong waterproof boots they cared very little for that.

Rigging the rope around a tree so that Edith could pull up easily, Ned and Dick climbed down the slippery sides of the gully and began work, scooping out several pans full of the black sand over which the water ran.

"There's gold here!" cried Ned, shaking his pan.

"I can see it, but the nuggets are very small."

"Not in my pan," said Dick. "Look here!"

He picked one weighing at least an ounce out with his fingers and held it up.

"Gold?" called Edith.

"You bet!" shouted Dick. "Let down the bucket. We'll give you a sample. It's hard washing here in the water. I'd rather do my washing up above."

They had brought down a "rocker" from the hut to use in this very emergency, and it was their intention to send up sufficient sand to give it a fair trial.

This Edith drew up in the bucket, Dick doing the loading, while Ned turned his attention to the sides of the gully, which were so plastered over with fresh mud that little else could be seen.

Ned now took his spade and scraped away at the mud but without finding anything for a few moments.

Edith had drawn up her third bucketful of sand, when all at once Ned gave a loud shout.

"Look here!" he cried. "What do you say to that? Ha! Ha! What did I tell you? The Man in the Moon is all right!"

Close down at the water's edge, say a foot or a foot and a half up from the bottom of the gully, Young Klondike had uncovered a streak of black sand in which the tiny nuggets lay packed as close as peas in a pod.

"We've struck it! We've struck it!" cried Dick. "We are in luck again!"

It was a pay streak, sure enough, and to all appearance a good one.

The line of sand ran up the gully as far as Ned had scraped away the mud.

Its dip was toward the hollow which proved Young Klondike's theory correct. They had found the gold sheet at a high level, and it was still on the rise.

Ned immediately crossed over to the other side of the gully and began scraping away the mud there.

In a moment he had made another strike.

The golden sands were found in their proper place, and a little higher than on the other side.

This was very satisfactory. Young Klondike saw that even if he did nothing else he had accomplished a splendid afternoon's work.

The pickax was now brought into requisition, and several bucketsful of this nugget bearing sand were dug out and hoisted up by Edith, who took care to keep it separate from that which had been drawn up before.

When they had sent up enough for a fair trial, Ned went up himself, leaving Dick behind to pass up the water needed to work the rocker.

Now, a rocker, such as is used in placer mining, is an oblong box from one to two feet wide, and varying

in length, according to the ideas of the man who makes it.

One end is open, as is the top, and in the other end a sieve made of wire is placed. In the middle of the rocker there is sometimes a sunken groove; at other times the sieve is of finer mesh; it all depends upon the kind of sand to be washed out.

Young Klondike's rocker had the groove, the use of which will be presently shown.

"You think you've hit it, Ned?" asked Edith.

"I'm sure of it. Did you examine the sand at all?"

"Yes; a little."

"And saw that it was full of gold, of course?"

"I saw that there was some gold there. I would not like to say just how much, but the nuggets are very small."

"We shall soon know," said Ned, and he placed the rocker, throwing in first a few shovels of the sand which had come from the bottom of the creek.

"Why don't you try the other?" asked Edith.

"Oh, I'm getting to be too old a hand at this business to be easily excited at every new discovery. I dug out that sand first and I shall run it through the rocker first. We'll try the other later on."

Having got the right quantity of sand in the rocker, Ned called to Dick to send up a bucket of water, which Edith poured into the rocker little by little, Ned shaking the box all the while.

The water washed off the loose sand; the coarser gravel Ned picked out with his fingers, the sand and earth passing out through the meshes of the sieve, but the flakes of gold, the dust and nuggets, owing to their greater specific gravity, sank into the groove which was below the level of the sieve.

Then when the rocking was finished, quite a little deposit was found mixed with some sand and such stone as would not pass through the sieve.

"That's a good showing," said Edith, "we can't expect anything better at the first try."

"Certainly not," replied Ned. "Now we'll try a rocker full of the side showing sand. If that turns out as I think it will, there will be no cause to complain."

The sand was then heaped into the rocker, and the washing began.

That the result was bound to be something startling was soon apparent, the nuggets could be seen settling down into the bottom of the rocker.

"We've hit it!" cried Young Klondike, as the last of the water ran off and showed the groove with flake gold and nuggets all along its line.

"Look there, Edith! Anything the matter with that? I tell you, it's going to pay to work the Man in the Moon!"

CHAPTER VII.

HOW YOUNG KLONDIKE'S BIG BLACK BEAR SAVED THE CAMP.

It was just at dusk when the Unknown came in with Nat Trueman.

"Oh, we have had such a time, Ned!" he exclaimed. "While Trueman was down at the creek getting water somebody broke into the hut and waltzed off with all our provisions. By the Jumping Jeremiah, they made a clean sweep and there was nothing for it but to go on their trail."

"Come, that's interesting!" cried Ned. "Did you catch the thieves? Did you get the stuff back?"

"That's just what we didn't. We followed the trail three or four miles up into the mountains and there lost it. I would have gone further, but I knew that we couldn't make the Man in the Moon by dark if I did and I thought you might be worried, so we gave it up and here we are with the tools."

"Well, that's a great start," said Dick. "Now we've nothing to eat but bear meat; after all our careful preparations that seems too bad."

"Oh, it isn't so bad as that," said Mr. Trueman; "I have some canned goods hidden in the hut here, and I don't believe Dutch Heinrich got on to them. I suppose you will blame me for this; I'm very sorry, I'm sure, for I can't tell you how grateful I feel to you all for driving Dutch Heinrich's gang off the Man in the Moon."

This was all very well, but it did not mend matters at all.

Ned was about to say more, and inquire how it all came about, but the Unknown gave him the wink and he held his tongue.

That evening, after a supper of cold bear meat, when Ned had told him about the big black bear and the wonderful luck they had in the gully, the Unknown got him outside with Dick.

"I'm glad you took my hint and didn't do much talking to Trueman," he said. "Ned, I don't trust that man."

"Why, what's the matter? He seems to tell a straight enough story," replied Ned.

"Do you think so?"

"Yes."

"Well, so did I at first. I believed him, but I don't now."

"Hello! You know something you have not told."

"Well, I do."

"What?"

"Call me stupid, if you like, but I followed that trail when I ought never to have done it. I don't believe it was the trail of the thief at all."

"You say thief, could one man take all our stuff?"

"That's just it. Trueman's theory was that he hid some of it but a short distance from the hut and packed the rest off, and I was willing to test it. My opinion is now that the trail I followed through the mud and over the rocks was an Indian's trail, and that Trueman knows the Indian well."

"In other words that Trueman is a fraud, and stole the provisions himself."

"Yes."

"But what possible motive could he have for

doing so? Wouldn't it pay him better to stick to us?"

"Don't know. Time will show. We want to keep a sharp lookout, though. I claim to be a pretty good reader of character, and by the Jumping Jeremiah I don't trust that man."

"Very well," said Ned; "now I'll tell you just what we'll do, and that will be to go right on exactly as though nothing had happened. We can support ourselves here for a couple of weeks anyhow, and by that time we shall know where we are at; if worse comes to worse we'll go back to the Young Klondike and return again with men enough to hold the Man in the Moon against all odds."

Having made this announcement Young Klondike returned to the hut, and the evening passed pleasantly enough. Certainly no one gave Mr. Trueman the least cause to believe they suspected that all was not right.

At nine o'clock all hands turned in but Ned, who announced that he would go on the watch.

Trueman offered to do this himself, but Ned would not hear to it, so after Edith had retired to the loft overhead, the owner of the Man in the Moon lay down in one of the bunks, Dick and the Unknown following his example, while Ned seated himself before the fire to keep watch until midnight, when it was arranged that the detective should be called.

Did we mention that Trueman produced quite a quantity of canned goods from a secret closet ingeniously constructed in the loft?

If not, we call attention to it now, and will also state that nothing had been seen of Young Klondike's big black bear after they returned from the gully.

Dick felt quite certain that the animal had run away and would appear no more in camp.

How entirely mistaken Dick was in this will soon be shown.

It was dull work sitting there by the fire listening to the Unknown snore.

Ned tried to read, but it made him sleepy. Then he got up and for an hour paced up and down in front of the hut, but toward midnight it began to grow cold and he returned inside.

When he entered he glanced casually at the bunks, and saw that his three companions were apparently sleeping peacefully.

Trueman had just pulled the blankets over him and covered his head with his big felt hat, saying that this was the way he always slept.

The hat was there on the pillow when Ned looked and he never once thought of making a closer examination. In fact, after a few moments, he did not think about much of anything, for he dozed off in his chair.

Now of course this was very bad in Young Klondike—altogether out of order. He would have been vexed enough with the Unknown if he had caught him at it.

Probably Ned did not sleep twenty minutes, and

when he awoke it was with a start. There was a curious scratching sound at the door.

He sprang up and listened.

"That's Jack," he thought. "I'll bet on it! Strange that he should come back here again when Trueman declares that he knows nothing about the beast, and never saw him around the camp before."

For a moment he stood listening, the scratching having ceased. Then it began again and Ned opened the door.

There, sure enough, was the big black bear.

He gave Ned a look of peculiar intelligence, and began wagging his head from side to side.

"Hello, Jack! What brought you back here?" exclaimed Young Klondike, holding out his hand.

Jack immediately stood up and presented his paw in the most approved style.

"Hungry?" asked Ned.

Jack wagged his head.

Among the canned goods which Trueman had produced were several boxes of honey. Ned remembered that bears were fond of honey, and he went to fetch one of these. When he came back, Jack was at the bunk smelling around the Unknown, attracted there, perhaps, by the detective's loud snores.

Ned called him, and he came right over to where he stood, just like a dog.

Ned put the box of honey down on the hearth, and Jack soon demolished it; but he had not come for this, and as soon as he finished the honey he shuffled over to where Dick lay, and looked into the bunk, and then went on to where Trueman was supposed to be lying, "supposed to be," we say, for all at once Ned saw Jack seize the hat in his teeth and begin shaking it, and then to his utter amazement he perceived that there was no head beneath.

Trueman was not in the bunk, but a big log of wood was there under the blankets, and all this time Young Klondike had been deceived into thinking that it was a man.

"Heavens! This has come about while I was asleep!" murmured Ned, throwing aside the blankets. "He's sneaked out and put this thing into the bunk to deceive me! Good for you, Jack! You shall have another box of honey for this!"

Jack got his honey, and Young Klondike awakened the Unknown and frankly confessed that he had gone to sleep on his post, telling him just what had occurred.

"The ungrateful scoundrel!" cried the detective. "What did I tell you? There's something crooked here. He means to sneak back again and—look at the bear, Ned! Look at the bear!"

Jack was over by the door, and now he suddenly rose on his hind legs and began fumbling with the latch.

Before they could get to him the door swung open and Mr. Jack ran out.

Ned and the Unknown hurried after him, but Jack ran up on the rocks behind the hut. When he had ascended about fifty feet he turned and looked back;

then he came back a little way; then he went forward again, and then back once more.

"He wants us to follow him, that's what he's up to," declared the Unknown. "I tell you, Ned, that bear is no fool."

Be that as it might, it did almost seem as if Jack understood what was being said, for he immediately ran off along the ledge and disappeared around the bend in the rocks, acting altogether just as an intelligent dog might have done.

"We want to go after him," said the Unknown. "There's something in this, sure."

"And leave the hut unguarded?"

"I'll wake up Dick."

"No; Dick is tired out. I want him to sleep. You stay here—I'll go."

To this the Unknown agreed rather grumblingly, and Ned hurriedly climbed the rocks to the place where he had last seen the bear.

When he reached it he found there was a narrow break in the ledge just around the bend where Jack had disappeared.

It was certain that the bear must have gone through this break, for there was no other way in which he could have gone, and it was quite impossible for him to ascend any higher.

Ned unslung his rifle and crept on, coming in a moment into the open and this much to his surprise, for he had thought that the hills were solid here, but instead he saw that he was at the entrance to an old volcanic crater. An extensive hollow surrounded by steep cliffs on all sides lay before him, and away off in the distance he saw a light.

Jack was no longer visible; he had taken himself off somewhere, but he had done his work.

Ned's eyes becoming accustomed to the gloom, he could now distinguish a small hut in the distance. It stood alone in the middle of the hollow about a hundred yards away.

"By all that's wonderful! My black bear has done something for me!" muttered Ned. "I didn't know I had neighbors, but I want to find out who they are right away."

He stole across the intervening space and approached the hut.

The door was shut, but there was a window alongside of it, and in that window was a broken pane, so Young Klondike not only had the chance to see all that was going on inside, but to hear as well, and very useful it proved, for when he looked in he saw Dutch Heinrich sitting on one side of a table and the Man in the Moon on the other. There was a whisky bottle and two glasses between them; they had been drinking and were now talking. Over on the other side of the hut was a tier of bunks, four altogether, and three of them were occupied.

This was Young Klondike's discovery and it was all due to Jack. We need scarcely add that Ned listened with all attention to what Trueman was saying at that moment.

"I tell you, Dutch," he remarked, bringing his fist

down upon the table, "you are making a big mistake. To capture either Young Klondike himself and hold him for ransom, or to capture the girl and expect Young Klondike to pay through the nose to get her back again won't work at all. These schemes have been tried by others and they've always failed. What you want to do is to wait till he has developed the Man in the Moon, and taken out a lot of gold. Then we'll pounce down upon them and scoop in the pot. They all have the utmost confidence in me and I shall remain with them. You may depend upon my reporting promptly when the time comes to make a move."

"The scoundrel!" thought Ned. "This is the sort of trap we have walked into. Good for you, Jack! You have saved the camp!"

Eagerly he listened for Dutch Heinrich's answer. It was slow in coming.

The big claim jumper, for that was Heinrich's true character, proceeded to fill his pipe, and then deliberately pouring out a glass of whisky took a drink.

"It don't vos schust de vay I see it," he replied. "From what you tell me, Young Klondike has located a good lead on the Man in the Moon already yet. Vell, den we vork dat ourselves some day, but now we schust go down and capture dis poy himself, and run him up into the mountains. Vat, vill dey not pay big money to get him free? Oh, yah! I tink yes."

"Dutch, you're a fool!" cried Trueman, angrily. "You can't see beyond the length of your nose."

"Who says dat?"

"I say it."

"Hein! I vas a fool, vas I? Den very vell. I go anyhow, und I go now! Ve vill capture Young Klondike dis very night. Here, vake up dere! You vas wanted. Come boys! Come boys! Business right now."

"You'll be sorry for this, Dutch!" cried Trueman, pounding the table. "I say it shan't be! Let me go back and carry out my plan!"

"I say it shall be!" retorted Heinrich, with equal emphasis, as the men aroused tumbled out of the bunks.

Ned waited to hear no more.

Of course, anyone could see that it was time to be going, and he ran across the open space as fast as his legs could carry him.

When he reached the break in the ledge, he turned and looked back to the hut.

Dutch Heinrich and the others were just coming out. Each man carried his rifle, and altogether it looked like business, and very serious business it unquestionably would have been, but for Young Klondike's big black bear.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE BIG STRIKE.

"HELLO, Young Klondike! By the Jumping Jeremiah, you are running as though Satan himself was close at your heels!"

"HANDSOME HARRY."

It was the Unknown who spoke.

Ned had run into him just as he was turning out of the narrow passage upon the ledges.

The detective carried his rifle ready for business, and Dick and Edith were with him.

Ned stopped short, panting for breath.

"What in the world brought you all up here?" he gasped.

"Came to look after you," said Dick. "Zed woke me up and I just wouldn't hear to hanging back. Where's the bear?"

"I don't know where the bear is, but I've located Trueman all right."

"Hello! And he's a fraud just as I said he was," exclaimed the Unknown.

"That's what! You made no mistake. He's coming down upon us now with Dutch Heinrich and three men—they mean to attack the hut."

"By the Jumping Jeremiah! We must head them off on that, then, and I think I see a way."

"What! How?" asked Edith. "Don't let us have any fighting if there is any possible way to avoid it."

"See that big boulder up there on the ledge?"

"Yes."

"Well, then, all we've got to do is to tumble it down into this break and the job is accomplished. It will block the way completely. Get out of that hollow they may, and very likely will, but they'll not do it before daylight, of that I am sure."

"I think it can be done," said Ned. "Anyhow, let's try it."

They scrambled up upon the ledge to the projecting shelf upon which the boulder rested.

It was a tremendous big rock, but it hung half over the edge of the shelf, and the Unknown was quite right in thinking that their united strength would be sufficient to tumble it down.

They all threw their weight against it, and down went the big boulder, crashing into the break, which it blocked up completely.

To get up to the shelf from the other side Ned saw would be quite impossible, for the rocks rose perpendicularly. He could not see into the hollow, though, and, of course, it was impossible to see Dutch Heinrich and his gang.

"Let's wait here and give them one dose," suggested Dick. "Not that we want to do any killing, of course, but we can easy give them a big scare."

Young Klondike made no objection, so they all crouched down on the rock and waited.

It was only a few moments before they could hear the voices in the hollow below.

"What the blazes was it?" Trueman was saying. "An earthquake? Hang me, if I don't think so. It would be a bad job if the passage was blocked up."

"Come on! Come on!" Dutch Heinrich was growling.

Evidently Trueman liked to hear himself talk, for he kept right on.

"They'll be waked up by this, sure," he continued.

"They'll find the log of wood in the bunk and tumble

to the whole business. You better have let me go back as I proposed."

"Now," whispered Dick, for the five men had just come into view.

All hands lowered their rifles and blazed away down into the break.

The men stopped, Trueman uttering a sharp cry.

"Oh, I'm shot, I'm shot!" he shouted. "I told you so! They've done for me!"

But evidently it was not as bad as this, for Trueman turned and made off at full speed.

Dutch Heinrich and the others followed him, and seeing that their work was finished for the present, Young Klondike led the way down on to the ledges and they started back for the hut.

"I wonder who's shot did that?" asked Edith. "I know it wasn't mine."

"Nor mine," added Ned. "I'm half sorry it happened, too. I'm didn't want bloodshed. Dick, are you responsible for this?"

"I'm positive sure it wasn't me," said Dick. "I can swear to it."

"That boils it down to me," said the Unknown, "and by the Jumping Jeremiah, I'm bound to admit that I'm the guilty man. I fired at the scoundrel's legs and I believe I fetched his shins, too, but, ye gods and little fishes, I couldn't have hurt him much. Didn't you see the way he ran?"

Of course there was no more sleep that night, but all hands could have turned in and rested in peace with perfect safety, for there was no further alarm.

Morning dawned clear and rather cold. Edith and Dick broiled bear steaks and warmed up some canned tomatoes, so they made out a fairly good breakfast.

After it was eaten Ned announced that he proposed to go right to work on the claim just as though nothing had occurred.

"I don't believe there will be any further trouble," he said, "and if there is we can fight them off. We've let Dutch Heinrich know pretty plainly that we are up and dressed, and it is my opinion that he will let us alone after this."

"What's the programme?" asked Dick. "More digging in the gully?"

"Could we do better? We've taken out at least a thousand dollars' worth of gold so far. I call that good enough."

"It's all right, but I thought you were going to sink a shaft where your bear scraped up the ground?"

"So I am. We'll start our first fire going there, too, but don't you see, Dick, it's only about twenty feet in from the gully to that point; we can be drifting in while the fire is burning. If the lead holds we can begin sinking as soon as we get the frost burned out, and anyway, I should think you and I could dig in twenty feet in two days, not to make a regular tunnel big enough to stand up in and work to advantage of course, but just scoop out a hole so as to show what we may expect."

"It will be hard working unless we can stand up to it, Ned."

"So hard that I don't propose to have anything to do with it," broke in the Unknown, who was listening to this conversation. "I reckon I'll go on a prospecting tour on my own account."

"Which means that you intend to climb up on the hills and see what's become of Dutch Heinrich's gang," laughed Ned. "Oh, I know your game."

"Well, and what's the matter with that? What's the use of having a detective along with you if he don't attend to his business? The enemy is hovering around us, and by the Jumping Jeremiah, we want to know where he is at!"

Ned laughed. "You might just as well go," he said, "for you won't do any work anyhow. Look out for yourself, though."

"Yes, and for you, too, and don't you forget it, Young Klondike. It's well that you have a protector. Under the circumstances anyone else would skip down French Gulch in a hurry instead of staying here musing with the Man in the Moon."

At half past nine work began at the gully.

Edith came down to help, as by this time the Unknown had taken his departure and the boys did not care to have her remain alone at the hut.

The first thing done was to gather all the dry wood they could find, and fortunately there happened to be plenty of it in the cedar grove.

This was piled up over the ground where the bear had scratched and the fire started, and a number of green cedars were cut down and thrown on the blaze.

These made a good hot fire which burned slowly, and before they had finished their work the water was running away from the blazing pile.

"I don't believe the frost lies very deep here," declared Ned. "The gully must have been filled more than once during the spring rains, and all this ground overflowed."

"My idea exactly," said Dick, "for there wasn't a trace of it in the sides of the gully, but we shall soon know when we begin our drift."

It was eleven o'clock before they were ready to start in on that part of the work. Ned marked out a space about four feet high and went at it with his pick-ax.

Dick shoveled the dislodged earth back into the gully, and Edith, who could do nothing to help at that stage of the game, amused herself by washing out a few pans to see what it was like.

"Why, this sand is just full of nuggets," she soon reported. "I never saw anything so rich."

"Keep at it," cried Ned. "You may make your fortune before we get in under the place where the shaft is going to be."

This was putting it too strong, of course, but before one o'clock when they knocked off for dinner it was a fact that Edith had nuggets which weighed up to five hundred dollars value to show, and this just with an ordinary pan and scarcely any exertion.

Young Klondike was immensely elated.

It was now almost certain that the Man in the Moon was going to prove a very rich mine.

Before Edith had quite got the dinner ready the Unknown came down into the gully.

He came sauntering along whistling a tune, with his tall hat tipped back on his head as unconcerned as if he had simply been taking a stroll instead of hunting up one of the worst toughs in French Gulch.

"What luck?" he called. "What luck, Young Klondike? Ye gods and little fishes, don't keep me in suspense, but just tell it right out."

"Immense!" answered Ned; "what luck did you have? See anything of the enemy?"

"Indeed I did not, but I saw your big black bear."

"Hello! Where?"

"Away up on top of the cliffs where I couldn't get at him. He sent his love to you and told me to say that he would call around again some of these days."

"By gracious, I shall be glad to see old Jack whenever he takes it into his head to give me a call," replied Ned. "But are you sure it was the same bear?"

"Looked like him. I wouldn't want to swear to it, though."

"I thought not. But about the enemy—how far did you get?"

"Why, I got clear to the hut, dear boy. I found a way of getting down into the hollow, and I reckon Dutch Heinrich and your friend Trueman must have found a way of getting out of it, for they were certainly not there."

"I hope they have taken themselves off together," said Edith. "I don't want any trouble, but what are you going to do about paying this man, Ned, in case we make a big strike? You will hardly know how to trade with him after what has occurred."

"Hold on!" cried the Unknown, "before Young Klondike answers that question let me say a word. How do you know that we ever laid eyes on Mr. Nat Trueman, the owner of the Man in the Moon?"

"The very thing I was thinking about!" exclaimed Dick.

"Of course, I don't know," said Ned. "To be sure this man came to us calling himself Trueman, but, after what I overheard at the hut I am quite willing to believe that the real owner of the Man in the Moon and I are strangers and that I have never met Nat Trueman at all."

"Exactly," said the Unknown. "I believe you have said it. That fellow, in my humble judgment, is simply one of Dutch Heinrich's gang."

While they ate dinner this matter was discussed further, and all were willing to admit that the Unknown was probably right.

Immediately after dinner work was resumed on the tunnel and kept up until dark.

The Unknown now took a hand in, for a third person was greatly needed to help Dick till the earth.

Dick shoveled it on as far as he conveniently could, and the Unknown then took it and tossed it into the

gully, where Edith kept on with her profitable panning, realizing upward of three hundred dollars for her afternoon's work.

When darkness came at last, Ned had driven his drift in for a good eight feet.

That ended the work for the day, and a quiet evening followed.

Nothing occurred during the night either; there was no sign of Dutch Heinrich or of Young Klondike's big black bear.

Next morning all hands went to work on the tunnel again, and when night overtook them they had passed in eighteen feet.

This left only two feet to go to reach the place where the bear had scratched.

"It's all right; that bear was a mascot for fair," declared the Unknown, leaning on his shovel just about the time it began to grow dark. "He's done a big thing for you, Young Klondike, no one can deny that."

"It isn't proved yet," said Ned. "Confound it all! We shall have to quit work before we have covered the whole distance. That's too bad."

"What's the matter with working by lantern light for once?" asked Dick.

"We might, I suppose. Where's Edith? Gone up to the hut?"

"To look after the supper," said the Unknown. "Have you decided the question of the lanterns?"

"Yes, we'll try it."

"All right. I'll get them; are you all through talking now?"

"I suppose so. What's the matter? What are you driving at?"

"I want recognition—that's all."

"Hello! What's the matter with you now, Zed?"

"A good deal. By the Jumping Jeremiah, I tried to get off a joke and nobody paid the least attention to me—it was nipped in the bud, so to speak."

"Time! Stop all work and listen to the Unknown's joke!" cried Ned, good-humoredly.

"You don't have to," chuckled the detective. "My joke is about work. Keep right on."

"Out with it. The wheels of commerce—I mean of mining—are blocked. Let's have that celebrated joke."

"It isn't celebrated yet. It may be after it is cracked, though."

"Go on! Give it to us!" said Dick. "We are wasting precious time."

"Well, then, here goes. I said that the big, black bear had been a mascot to Young Klondike."

"What in the name of sense!" cried Ned. "Where's the joke in that?"

"Just what I wanted you to ask me before, but you wouldn't. The joke is that he has made me work two full days at mining. Ha, ha, ha!"

"Bother! Get on and bring the lanterns," said Ned. "'Tis a joke, though, to see you work at mining. It will be a bigger one if——"

But Young Klondike's joke never materialized.

Ned was working while he talked, and at this moment having struck his pick into the sand he pried it out, and with it came a great mass of earth, more than he had intended, almost burying him with Dick to the knees.

"Look! Look!" cried Dick. "What's that? A nugget, as true as I live! Oh, Ned, you have made a big strike again!"

It was even so! Once more Young Klondike's wonderful luck stood by him.

It was no baby nugget which had been unearthed. This one must have weighed fifty pounds at least. Nor was this all. Hastily striking a match, Ned flashed it over the sand.

"By the Jumping Jeremiah, we've struck it rich!" shouted the Unknown. "Nuggets! Nuggets everywhere!"

And so there were. Big and little, the sand was full of them.

Young Klondike had made a big strike in the Man in the Moon.

CHAPTER IX.

JACK CALLS AGAIN AND MR. TRUEMAN TAKES A TUMBLE WHICH LEADS TO UNPLEASANT RESULTS.

"THERE's a fortune here, Ned."

"That's what there is, Dick."

"Ye gods and little fishes! Why, there's two fortunes!" cried the Unknown. "How much do you suppose that big nugget will pan out?"

"Impossible to say," replied Ned. "It is so mixed with dirt and disintegrated quartz that I wouldn't attempt to calculate, but for a guess I should say twenty-five thousand dollars would be a low estimate."

"Yes, and thirty thousand would be low. When I was hunting for my man among the gold diggings near Tomsk in Siberia, in '77, I saw a nugget——"

"Oh, bother the gold diggings of Tomsk!" cried Ned. "Will you get the lanterns or shall I go for them myself?"

"You can go if you want to," chuckled the Unknown, "but I'm gone already," and hurrying out of the drift, the detective went up to the hut to carry the good news to Edith, and soon returned with the lanterns for the boys.

Edith followed him down, and all thought of supper was abandoned until later.

Young Klondike kept right at work until six o'clock demonstrating that his theory was entirely correct.

This was not the lowest point of the gold sheet, but here lay a deposit which proved the great richness of the Man in the Moon.

The two feet were covered, and the sand grew rather richer than otherwise.

By the vigorous use of his pick Ned drove a small hole down about four feet below the bottom line of his drift.

"HANDSOME HARRY."

The rich deposit held its own. The sand was crammed full of nuggets.

To all appearances there would be very little trouble in cleaning up two or three hundred thousand dollars in the Man in the Moon in a few weeks' time.

"I'm ready to buy here," declared Young Klondike, when they all sat down to supper about seven o'clock. "Now let Trueman show up and prove his ownership, and I'm ready with my ten thousand dollars. I wish he would come right now."

As though in answer to Young Klondike's wish at that very moment there was a curious sound at the door.

It was not exactly a knock, more of a loud scratching.

"It's Jack!" exclaimed Ned, recognizing the sound instantly. "My big black bear has come again."

Dick sprang up and looked out the window.

"You're right; there he is!" he exclaimed.

"Shall I let him in?" demanded the Unknown.

"Certainly, why not?" replied Ned. "Shut the door on our mascot? Oh, no!"

So Jack came shuffling into the hut. Paying no attention whatever to anyone but Ned he stood up on his hind legs and held out his paw.

"How are you, old man? How are you, Jack?" said Ned, shaking hands.

"Shake hands with me, Jack?" asked the Unknown, putting out his hand.

Jack growled and showed his teeth.

It was the same when Dick tried it, but Jack allowed Edith to take his paw, and then he fell back on all fours and shuffled to the hearth where Ned had fed him the honey, and began smelling about.

"What's he after?" asked Edith. "He surely has some reason for doing that."

"He wants honey," said Ned. "Is there any left?"

"Four or five boxes. We can't spare a thing, though. Trueman took all our stuff and left us his, which don't amount to half as much. I don't know that we can afford to feed it to Master Jack."

"Oh, Jack must have his honey," declared Ned. "Who knows but what he has come to make another wonderful disclosure to us. We mustn't forget what he did before."

Ned then gave the bear two boxes of the honey, which he devoured greedily.

As soon as it was all eaten up and he was through licking his chops, Jack got right down to business in the most effective way.

Shuffling up to Ned, he seized his coat in his teeth and began to pull.

"What now?" exclaimed Dick. "Do you call that play? He'll tear your coat, Ned."

"He wants you to go out with him," said the Unknown. "By the Jumping Jeremiah, this is a most extraordinary bear!"

"That's what he wants, sure," replied Ned, "and

I'm going. Get me my rifle—all get your rifles! Wherever this bear wants to lead me to-night I go."

It really did seem as if Jack understood, for he immediately let go of Ned's coat and began scratching at the door.

No time was lost in getting the rifles, for all were very curious to see where this adventure would end.

As soon as he got outside Jack started off with a shuffling gait, but covering the ground rapidly, just the same.

Indeed it was impossible to keep up with him, and if it had not been a bright moonlight night it is doubtful if they could have kept the bear in view.

He did not run up on the rocks as before, but kept along up the gulch for fully a quarter of a mile. Then suddenly turning he began to scramble up the cliffs, following a steep ascent where the rocks were very much broken. It was well chosen, too, being in fact, about the only place anywhere near that the ascent could have been made.

"That's our road," said Ned. "I'd like to bet that we are going to see Dutch Heinrich's gang again."

"Edith mustn't go up there," said the detective. "It isn't safe."

"But I will," declared Edith. "I'd like to see anyone stop me if the rest of you are going, and of course you are."

By this time Ned was already on the ascent, and all hands followed him.

The bear kept in sight until they were almost at the top of the cliffs, a matter of fully five hundred feet, and then, when Ned least expected it, suddenly disappeared.

"Where in thunder is the bear?" called the Unknown.

"He went in among those rocks up on top," answered Ned. "Push on! We shall get there. There will be an immense view from the top of these cliffs."

Ned was pretty well in advance of the others now, and a little further effort brought him to the top of the cliffs.

Here he stood panting and taking in the wonderful view, for about everything there was going could be seen here but the bear.

On one side a view over the opposite cliffs across French Gulch could be had. For miles Young Klondike could see mountain upon mountain, peak rising above peak, all bathed in moonlight. It was a picture for an artist, but nothing peculiar for the Klondike. There are thousands of such views in that wonderful land.

On the other side Ned could look down into the old crater. He was almost at the end of that remarkable hollow. Just beyond where he stood the cliffs took a turn passing on around the old volcanic ring.

"Come on!" called Ned. "I can't see anything of the bear, but it is all right up here."

"We're a coming!" shouted the Unknown. "By the Jumping Jeremiah, I'll get there if my wind holds out."

Then Ned walked back over the rocks toward the edge of the crater and disappeared from view.

The Unknown pressed on, Edith and Dick keeping close behind him, when all at once they were startled by hearing a loud shout, followed by two shots in quick succession.

"I've got him! I've got him!" cried a voice. "Lend me a hand here! Quick! Quick!"

Then following close upon these cries came a resounding crash, and the cliffs seemed to tremble.

A succession of startling sounds followed. Great rocks seemed to be tumbling down the cliffs on the other side of the ridge.

Wild shouts mingled with the sounds for an instant, and then all was still.

Something tremendous had happened, and the Unknown pushed on to the top with all speed, fully prepared for the worst. When he scrambled up upon the level at last, there was no one to be seen, and the first object which met his gaze was Young Klondike's big black bear.

There was Jack shuffling up and down along the edge of the cliffs which overhung the crater, whining and growling.

He seemed afraid to go down, and paid no attention when the Unknown called to him:

"What is it? Oh, what is it, Zed?" called Dick and Edith from below.

"The boy has gone! There's nobody here but the bear!" cried the detective.

Then suddenly he added:

"By the Jumping Jeremiah, there goes the bear, too!"

Jack had suddenly made up his mind to try it.

Lowering himself head first over the edge of the cliffs he disappeared.

Of course something very serious had happened to Young Klondike. Ned never would have deserted his friends.

Leaving the Unknown and the others to speculate upon the strange occurrence, let us return to the moment when Ned walked over to the cliffs on the other side of the ridge which had a width of perhaps twenty-five feet.

There were many loose bowlders scattered about on the ridge, and some of them were of pretty good size.

"Plenty of chance for Jack to hide himself here," he muttered. "I'll take a look among those rocks."

He never reached them.

When almost up to where they lay, a man suddenly stepped out from behind the biggest and leveled a rifle at Ned, exclaiming: "surrender, Young Klondike! I've got you now!"

It was Dutch Heinrich.

He spoke in a comparatively low voice, and his words did not carry to Young Klondike's friends on the side of the cliff.

But they heard Ned's startled exclamation and the shots which followed, for Ned instantly fired, and so did Dutch Heinrich in return.

Ned's shot took the outlaw in the arm, and it is a wonder that Dutch Heinrich was able to return it. The instant he had done so he jumped back among the rocks and disappeared.

But Ned had no notion of letting him go so easy. He saw the blood on the rocks and knew that the shot must have told. His aim had been for Dutch Heinrich's left arm, and as a matter of fact he hit it.

The villain got himself out of the way as quick as possible; jumping back among the bowlders he disappeared.

"He's alone," thought Ned. "I've winged him just as I intended to do. I can capture him too if I try."

He sprang in among the bowlders drawing his revolver in case of close work, when all at once the man he had known as Nat Trueman rose up before him, and making a rush got Young Klondike by the throat, at the same time giving those cries for his friends to help which reached the ears of Dick, Edith and the Unknown.

Ned fought like a tiger. He felt that his was a gone case unless he could succeed in shaking off that terrible grip.

Evidently Mr. Trueman had not been very badly injured by the Unknown, for he held on grimly, fighting for all he was worth and at the same time trying to keep back from the edge of the cliffs.

What the result might have been under ordinary circumstances it is hard to say, for it was the extraordinary that occurred.

With a mighty effort Young Klondike disengaged those terrible fingers from about his neck and threw the man from him.

No use!

Trueman caught him again, this time around the waist.

Once more Ned pushed him away, and this time Trueman, in his effort to stop himself, made a misstep and went tumbling over the edge of the cliffs with a startled yell.

In his effort to save himself he clutched at the rocks, but they were disintegrated and broken and gave way beneath his grasp, and then all at once a sharp, crackling sound was heard—a noise like thunder—and down went a large section of rock at the edge of the cliffs, taking some of the big bowlders with it, and Young Klondike went with the rocks!

What caused the break is more than we can say. Probably the rocks had been broken before, and it only needed the jar which was given to them by the struggle to complete the work.

Down they went, carrying poor Ned with them. Why he was not killed outright is almost unexplainable, but good luck was with the boy and he fell clear of the rocks, and before he had time to fully realize what had happened found himself lodged in the branches of a stunted cedar tree which grew on the side of the cliffs.

The instant the crash came Dutch Heinrich ap-

peared from among the bowlders further along the ridge.

He seemed terribly frightened. With one fearful glance over the edge of the precipice he took to his heels, and running at full speed along the ridge disappeared among the bowlders further on.

And there was Young Klondike in the tree, not hurt a bit, but terribly shaken up as may well be imagined.

He held on for dear life, half expecting that the tree itself would give way and let him down, for it swayed terribly; its roots had been partly dislodged by a big bowlder which struck it on the way down.

Yes, the tree was falling. Ned realized it and made a jump for a narrow shelf on the side of the cliffs, which he had no more than gained when the tree went down with a crash.

Here he just crouched down and held on to himself for dear life. Everything was swimming about him. His head was all in a whirl and the only wonder was he did not topple over and go down into the crater from sheer nervousness, but calmness came at last, and looking up he perceived that he was at the mouth of a cave which opened off in under the cliffs.

Of course Ned lost no time in crawling into the cave. He might have given a shout to let his friends know that he still lived, but he did not think of it then, and for this neglect he could scarcely be blamed.

The cave was quite high enough for him to stand upright, and as Young Klondike looked on into the gloom he could see a faint light burning in the distance. He hurried toward it, and soon found himself in a larger cave, which seemed to run parallel with the line of the ridge.

Here there was a fire, and by its side lay a man bound hand and foot.

"Who are you?" he exclaimed, fixing his eyes upon Ned. "What has happened? Is it an earthquake? Whoever you are, young man, I ask you to help me, and I'm your friend to the last hour of my life."

The mere sound of the man's voice helped Young Klondike to recover himself.

"You shan't stay a prisoner there if I can help it, neighbor," he exclaimed, whipping out his jack-knife and cutting the cords which bound the man, who seemed to be pretty well advanced in years.

"Heaven bless you!" he exclaimed, as Ned helped him to rise. "Look here, I know you if you don't know me. It's Young Klondike, or I make a great mistake."

"That's what they call me," replied Ned. "I don't remember ever to have seen you before."

"My name is Trueman—Nat Trueman. I've seen you in Dawson City, but probably you don't remember me. Why should you? We were never introduced."

"Trueman! What! the owner of the Man in the Moon?"

"Yes, that is my mine. But we mustn't stay here. A week ago I was captured by Dutch Hein-

rich's gang, and they've held me a prisoner here ever since, why, I'm sure I can't imagine. The Man in the Moon is worthless, and I've nothing that these scoundrels could want to steal."

"I know why well enough!" cried Ned. "It was to get you out of the way so they could work their game on me. If you know any way out of this cave, Mr. Trueman, show it to me. I can protect you and I will. I have friends up on the ridge, and they will help us. We may need them, for Dutch Heinrich is there, too."

And in a few brief sentences Ned went on to tell what had occurred.

"That man who personated me is one of the gang!" exclaimed Mr. Trueman. "He's as big a scoundrel as Dutch Heinrich himself. Of course there is a way out of this cave. It has two openings, one above near the top of the ridge and one lower down into the outer cave, the way you came. Follow me, Young Klondike, we shall be on the ridge in a moment. I wish you were armed, though. These men are a desperately bad set and are almost sure to attack us. But come this way, we'll do the best we can."

Thus saying Mr. Trueman led the way along through the cave, and soon came to a place where there was a steep ascent to a higher level.

They had now passed beyond the range of the fire's light, and it was so dark that Ned could scarcely see where to plant his feet.

"We must have light here!" he exclaimed. "Wait till I strike a match."

"No, no!" whispered Mr. Trueman. "We shall only attract their attention. They may be right ahead of us; it seems to me that I can hear them. Wait! Keep still. We want to make sure."

Ned paused and listened. Certainly there was something moving in the darkness beyond.

He could hear a strange, scratching sound, but he never once thought of Jack.

All at once the noise ceased, and as the moments passed and it was not heard again Mr. Trueman whispered that they would go on, and took Ned's hand and led him up the steep ascent, until all at once they were brought up with a round turn against a wall of rock.

"What's this! What's this?" gasped Mr. Trueman. "I must have taken a wrong turning. We are lost—lost underground."

CHAPTER X.

SAVED BY THE BEAR.

NEVER dreaming that Young Klondike could be alive and well and within a few feet of them, Dick, Edith and the Unknown stood there on the top of the ridge looking at the broken cliffs.

"This is a bad job," said the Unknown. "There

has been a landslip here; I'm afraid Ned has gone down with it. By the Jumping Jeremiah, I hate to say it, but it looks very much that way."

"Don't say it, then!" exclaimed Dick. "For Heaven's sake don't even suggest such a thing. Something has happened, of course, but until the last gasp I'm going to believe that Ned has been able to take care of himself the same as he has always done."

Edith shuddered and said nothing, but she feared the worst.

"The bear!" exclaimed the Unknown, after a moment. "What became of the bear?"

"Confound the bear!" cried Dick. "I wish we'd never seen him! For some mysterious reason he seems to know just enough to lead us into trouble and—hello! I hear him now!"

"So do I!" cried the Unknown. "Where can he be? He went over the cliff, but I can't see him. I shall break my neck if I lean over any further than this."

Indeed the Unknown was leaning over quite as far as was safe already, but he could see nothing of bruin, although they could all distinctly hear him growling and whining down there under the cliffs.

"The beast has managed to crawl down on to some shelf on the rocks there," declared the detective, lying down flat and leaning over in a most horribly dangerous fashion. "Yes, I can see him. He's there! I can just see his tail."

"Call to him!" said Edith.

Before the words had left her lips a voice was heard under the cliffs, calling:

"Jack! Jack! Hello, Jack!"

"Ned!" shouted Dick. "Hooray, what did I tell you? He's alive!"

It was Young Klondike's voice fast enough, for indeed, the Unknown had not had time to say a word.

"Hello, there, Ned! Hello! Hello!" he shouted now. "Where are you? Speak! Ye gods and little fishes! If you are alive say so and relieve our minds!"

"Hello, Zed! Hello!" came the answer. Ned's voice had a muffled sound, and seemed to come from underground.

Before the Unknown could reply he saw the bear's head come into view under the rocks.

Jack was coming up again. In some mysterious way he managed to twist himself so that he could get his forepaws against the cliffs, and up he came, pulling himself from one projection to another, until he gained the top of the ridge, where he began whining at the Unknown's feet.

"Was there ever such a wonderful bear!" cried Dick. "He knows it all, and would tell if he only could. He wants you to go down there, that's what. Hark! Ned is calling! Something must be done!"

Dick ran to the edge of the cliffs and leaned over as far as he dared.

"Ned! Ned!" he shouted. "Hello, down there! Can you hear what I say?"

"Perfectly well!" came the answer. "Who is there with you, Dick? All hands?"

"Yes, yes! Where are you?"

"In a cave. Where's Jack?"

"He's just come up here. It was through him we got on to you. Can't you come out and show yourself?"

"Can't do it. The way is blocked by a big rock. One of you will have to get down here and put it out of the way."

Dick was in despair.

"How are we going to do it?" he shouted. "It's a good twenty feet down to where we first saw the bear, and as steep as the side of a house."

"Yes, and the chances are you couldn't move the rock if you were down here," Ned's voice answered. "We shall have to do it ourselves."

"Is there anyone with you, then?"

"Yes; Mr. Trueman. Here goes! We are going to make a big try for it. Wait!"

"That man again!" exclaimed the Unknown. "There is trouble wherever he is. I don't like this for—Ye gods and little fishes, what now?"

Suddenly there was a fearful crash, and all saw a big boulder go tumbling down into the valley.

It had fallen with the landslip, and lodging on the rocky shelf off from which the upper entrance to the cave opened, had completely blocked the way.

But now that it was gone poor Ned and Mr. Trueman were but little better off.

Ned came out on the shelf, and by holding on to his companion was just able to show himself to them, but that was all.

The face of the cliff had been completely changed by the landslip. Where before the ascent would have been easy enough it was now quite impossible for anything but a bear.

"We can never get up there," declared Ned, after he had explained what had happened. "There's just one thing to do, and that is to get a rope."

"I'll go!" cried the detective. "Confound that bear! He'll tear the coat off my back, but I don't want to kick him or he might take the notion to tear the head off my shoulders, which would be worse."

"Is Jack there?" shouted Ned. "Is the Unknown talking about Jack?"

"Yes, yes!" cried Dick. "Don't worry; we are going to do something to help you right away."

"Then what Jack wants is to have someone of you follow him. Do it. Ten to one he knows another way into the cave!"

"By the Jumping Jeremiah, I wouldn't wonder if he was right!" exclaimed the Unknown. "Lead on, Jack; I'm with you, my boy. Ye gods and little fishes, you shall have a barrel of honey if you'll only get us out of this isnap."

"Don't promise my mascot impossibilities!" cried Ned. "Just follow him. He knows what he is about every time."

And indeed it looked very much that way. Jack went down on the shelf because he had been there

before, and believed that he could get into the cave that way.

When he found that he couldn't, he went upon the ridge again and now he went shuffling off among the bowlders looking back from time to time at the Unknown, who kept close behind him.

Decidedly there never was so intelligent a bear as Jack.

Edith remained to talk to Ned and tell him what was going on, but Dick and the Unknown kept close behind the bear.

All at once Jack disappeared between two big bowlders, and when they came up to the place there was a narrow opening leading down into the ledge; a mere hole, but into it the bear had undoubtedly gone.

"There you are!" cried Dick. "This is what comes of following Jack."

"He's the most remarkable bear ever I heard of!" exclaimed the Unknown. "Does that hole lead down into the cave?"

"More than likely."

"Then who is to follow him?"

"You can never get through there in the wide world."

"I'm afraid I can't," said the detective, dismally, "but you might manage to do it, Dick."

Dick was ready to make the attempt. Dangerous as it seemed to follow a big black bear into what might prove to be his den, he did it without the least hesitation. So narrow was the hole that he had to crawl in on his hands and knees; it went downward into the ledge on a gradual descent, twisting and turning.

Pitch dark it was, of course, and Dick, who was almost smothered, could see nothing of Jack, but he could hear him dragging himself along ahead, until all at once the passage ended and Dick found himself in the cave.

He sprang up and shouted to Ned, receiving an answer instantly.

"Where are you?" demanded Dick. "I can't see a thing."

"Right here, and so is Jack! Good Jack! We're coming, Dick! We are coming!" shouted Ned. "We've been saved by my big black bear!"

Another instant and Young Klondike was at Dick's side shaking hands heartily, and Mr. Trueman was introduced; but when they came to look for Jack he was nowhere to be found.

He had shuffled off into the recesses of the cave and disappeared.

CHAPTER XI.

THE START DOWN THE GULCH WITH THE GOLD.

It was a happy party which gathered on the ridge a little later.

It took time to work up out through the hole, and when this was accomplished and the real Mr. Trueman introduced and everything explained, all started down the cliffs for the hut.

That night Mr. Trueman told his story, how he had worked on the Man in the Moon single handed and alone for many months, suffering all sorts of persecution from Dutch Heinrich's gang.

The man who had personated him he declared was one Phil Avery, a notorious scoundrel who had been run out of Dawson City for crooked work.

But the most interesting part of Mr. Trueman's narrative was about Jack.

Young Klondike's big black bear it seemed belonged to him. He had taken the animal as a cub and trained him like a dog.

"He is perfectly tame and very intelligent," said Mr. Trueman. "The only thing is you cannot keep him tied up. He will go away and be gone for days and then suddenly put in an appearance again. There isn't the least doubt that all Jack's maneuvers were intended to show you where I was hidden. Twice he came to me while I was in the cave and I tried my best to make him gnaw the ropes with which I was tied. I think I should have succeeded the second time, but that fellow Avery put in an appearance and Jack was scared off."

"The question now is what to do," said Young Klondike, after Mr. Trueman had finished his story. "Here we've been digging gold on your land and without your permission. I'd like to do the fair thing, but to tell the truth I'm stuck on the Man in the Moon, as they say, and don't want to give it up."

"You don't have to," said Mr. Trueman, wearily. "I've had quite enough of it and am willing to sell."

"Suppose we buy half just as I proposed to Avery?"

"No; buy all or none. I'll sell out cheap."

"What! Cheap! knowing of the big strike we have made?"

"Yes; I've had enough of it," said Mr. Trueman. "You had a perfect right to dig under the circumstances, and as you did not work my shafts I do not feel that I have any right to one ounce of the gold, especially as you have saved my life."

"Oh, we could never entertain any such proposition as that!" exclaimed Dick.

"Never in the world!" declared Young Klondike. "How do you know that I saved your life? You cannot tell."

"Yes, I'm sure of it. Dutch Heinrich hates me, and he would have killed me in the end," replied Mr. Trueman. "Make me an offer, gentlemen. Make me an offer and we can soon settle this deal."

Ned then held a conversation with Dick, Edith and the Unknown, and they agreed upon a plan.

"Mr. Trueman," said Young Klondike, calling up the old miner, "we will give you a hundred thousand dollars for the Man in the Moon outright—the whole business—and in addition half of the value of the gold we have already dug."

"I'll take that offer!" exclaimed Trueman.

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"But are you satisfied? I want you to be!" said Ned, "and so do my partners here."

"More than satisfied. This will make me independent for life, and I shall go right back to the States. You can't close the contract too quick to suit me."

"Consider it settled, then," said Ned. "Now the only thing that remains for us to do is to get out of this as quick as possible and take what gold we have dug with us. When we come up to the Man in the Moon next time it will be with men enough to hold it against all odds."

The night passed away while this conversation was going on, and at six o'clock Edith had breakfast all ready.

There were still several hours of darkness, and these were spent in making preparations for the start down the gulch.

The gold which had been washed out was now prepared for packing the five miles down to the other hut, where the steam launch had been left.

The big nugget was carefully buried in the gully, for, of course, it was impossible to transport that on anyone's back unless it was divided, and to this Young Klondike would not listen.

Mr. Trueman produced a lot of gunny bags, and into these the gold was packed. There was still time before daylight, and Dick proposed that they should wash out more gold, but as they had about all they could easily carry Young Klondike would not hear to it, and it was decided to start ahead by lantern light.

"Wonder if your double is dead, Mr. Trueman?" remarked the Unknown as they left the hut.

"Well, I am sure I don't know, and I'm still more certain that I don't care," replied the old miner. "I've had enough of the scoundrel and I should think that all of you might say the same."

"I hardly think it can be possible that he escaped unless he fell into a snowdrift," said Ned. "It is more than a hundred feet down to the bottom of the crater; besides if he had escaped would he not have come to the cave?"

"I don't consider him worth thinking about," said Edith. "Ned didn't throw him down—he threw himself down. He must take his chances. I only hope that he hasn't taken our launch."

"There!" cried the Unknown. "I have been waiting to hear some one say that. It's been worrying me like anything."

"Don't worry, Zed," put in Young Klondike. "If you do that we can all take a hand in. Just now I'm worrying about my big black bear."

"And he is yours if you ever see him again," said Mr. Trueman. "He seems to have taken a fancy to you, so we may consider that he goes with the Man in the Moon."

It was a long, weary tramp to the lower hut loaded down as Young Klondike's party were.

As they drew near the Unknown suggested that they put down their packs and give him a chance to reconnoiter.

"We don't want to run right into the arms of the enemy," he declared.

So the halt was made and the detective with his revolver all ready for instant use stole into the hut.

Morning was just at hand and Young Klondike's party stood watching him, concealed in the shadow of the cliffs.

As the Unknown drew near the hut they suddenly saw him make a bolt inside, and out he came again dragging a man.

"By the Jumping Jeremiah, I've got my man at last!" he shouted. "This way! This way! No mistake this time! I got the provisions, too!"

"It's Trueman! I mean Avery!" cried Ned, and they ran on to the hut to find the fellow in the detective's clutches.

Now, the Unknown always carried a pair of handcuffs in readiness for "his man," as he called the mysterious criminal of whom he was supposed to be in search, and he had lost no time in snapping them about Avery's wrists.

"Here he is!" he shouted, jumping about his prisoner. "Ye gods and little fishes, I've got him! I've got him! You can't kill his kind! Shoot them, blow them up, tumble them off of precipices, do any old thing you like with them, but they always turn up all right in the end."

To all this Avery never said a word. He had his head tied up in rags—it looked as though he had torn up his shirt to get them—and there he stood scowling, first at Young Klondike and then at the Unknown.

"Well, what are you going to do about it?" he growled at last. "You know me now in my true colors; but what are you going to do about it, say?"

"I don't know as we are obliged to show you our hand, neighbor," replied Ned, quietly. "So you escaped, did you? I thought you were dead!"

"Dead be blowed! My kind is hard to kill. I fell into an old snowdrift under them ledges. I needn't ask you what you did. Caught on that tree near the cave, I suppose. If it wasn't so you wouldn't have been here."

"Phil Avery, you are our prisoner, and you go down the creek with us," said Ned. "I don't know that I care to waste much time talking to you, unless you've got something interesting to say."

"I've nothing to say, but I'd like to ask a question. Do you intend to turn me over to the Vigilance Committee down on El Dorado creek?"

"I'll answer that later. You admit that you are a fraud?"

"Ask him," replied Avery, pointing to Mr. Trueman. "He knows who and what I am."

"Don't waste a moment with him, dear boy," exclaimed the detective. "Do you know that I caught him in the act of packing up our provisions? They were not even taken out of the hut. He had just raised the floor boards in another place and hidden them under it. It makes me thundering mad when I think how I listened to his lies and took that long tramp among the hills."

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"How about the launch?" asked Edith.

The moment she pronounced these words Ned saw a change come over the prisoner's face.

"The launch is gone," he thought. "He knows something about it. I can tell by his looks."

Accompanied by Dick and Edith, Young Klondike hurried to the cave only to find himself mistaken, for the launch was still there and apparently undisturbed.

"Well," growled Avery, "you were dead wrong that time, weren't you? Thought I'd taken your blamed old boat."

"Plug that fellow's mouth up with a potato if he don't stop talking!" exclaimed the Unknown, who was bustling about getting the provisions out of the hut, while Mr. Trueman watched the prisoner. "What's the report about the boat?"

"It's all right," said Ned. "Don't seem to have been disturbed at all."

"Then he has some other game. Mark my words, he didn't come here for nothing. We shall find out what it means yet."

That might be, but they certainly did not succeed in getting anything out of Avery then, for he grew sulky and shut up as close as an oyster.

Young Klondike came back and asked him a lot of questions, but he could get nothing out of him. How he came to be in the hut he would not tell.

By this time it was broad daylight, and Ned and Dick dragged the launch out of the cave into the creek. Such of the provisions as they cared particularly about were loaded in, and all the gold was put aboard.

This was a pretty heavy load for the launch with the weight of the party added and it sank low in the water. Ned saw that great care would have to be observed or they were likely to be swamped.

He started the engine going and they were making good time down the creek, when all at once Phil Avery broke out again.

"Say, Young Klondike, let me go ashore and I'll tell you something," he said.

"Don't know about that," laughed Ned. "You and I have nothing to do with each other. Ask the Unknown. You are his man."

"Tell your tale and we'll decide afterward," said the detective. "I'm not going to buy a pig in a poke."

"I'll tell you where there's a lot of gold, more than you ever laid eyes on, rich as you are."

The Unknown snapped his fingers in the fellow's face contemptuously.

"That yarn won't wash," he said. "If you know where there is so much gold why don't you dig it yourself?"

"Am I in shape for digging just now?"

"You have been."

"You'd better listen to me."

"No, no! Can't catch us that way. You are with us and you are going to stay with us—that's all."

For a moment or two Avery was silent, but he appeared to be very nervous and kept peering ahead.

"You must stop!" he exclaimed at last. "If you value your lives don't attempt to pass that black rock on ahead there. This is no story. Do as I say."

"What's he driving at now?" demanded Dick. "Every five minutes he tries a new game."

"Go ashore, go ashore, quick!" cried Avery, excitedly. "The creek has been mined. Dutch Heinrich is going to blow you to blazes and get this gold."

"Hello! Here's serious business!" exclaimed Ned. "Shall we listen to him now?"

"Probably he lies," said the detective, "but I suppose we've got to be on the safe side."

Dick was steering, and by Ned's order he gave the wheel a sudden twist.

Then all at once there was a snapping sound, the chain had broken, the launch flew on down the creek.

"Gee whiz, we are lost!" cried Avery. "There's twenty pounds of rendrock in a waterproof case sunk in the creek, and there's Dutch Heinrich now! He has just fired the fuse!"

Sure enough a man suddenly rose into view behind the black rock.

It was Dutch Heinrich! He held a flaming torch in his hand which he waved at the boys.

Helpless now without its rudder the launch rushed on down the swollen creek.

Would it pass the black rock before the explosion came?

This was the question; for that Avery had told the truth and they were in great danger Young Klondike could not for an instant doubt.

CHAPTER XII.

THE LAST OF THE BIG BLACK BEAR.

"JUMP!" cried the Unknown! "Jump! We mustn't take our chances here!"

It was perfectly plain that there was something serious in the wind, for Phil Avery had deliberately thrown himself into the creek, handcuffs and all.

He was now swimming on his back as best he could, and making for the opposite side of the creek from where Dutch Heinrich stood shouting at him in language which showed plainly enough that they were no longer friends.

Mr. Trueman hastily followed his example, Edith and Dick sprang overboard and the Unknown followed them even as he spoke, but Young Klondike never made a move.

"Jump, Ned! Jump, and save yourself!" screamed Edith, for the launch was now within a dozen yards of the fatal spot.

"No!" cried Ned, firmly. "I'm going to take my chances. Look out for Edith, Dick. I'm going to save the gold!"

It was very brave of Ned surely, but it was also

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foolhardy, yet something seemed to tell him that it was the thing to do.

"How can he calculate the rapidity with which that fuse will burn even if there actually is one?" he said to himself. "If his game is to sink the gold in the creek and get it afterward, I'll block it."

"Look to yourself!" he shouted to Dutch Heinrich, and seizing a rifle which lay in the bottom of the boat he took deliberate aim and fired with no other idea than to drive the man away and prevent Heinrich from firing at him.

Dutch Heinrich took the warning and dodged behind the rock.

The next Ned saw he was running toward the cliffs at full speed.

"I'm safe," he thought. "He wouldn't have stayed there as long as he did if the explosion is to come quick enough to catch the launch."

But in spite of these attempts to encourage himself, Young Klondike's heart was in his mouth as he flew on down the creek.

A few seconds and he was abreast the black rock. A few feet more and he was past it.

Then all at once a fearful explosion rang out, and a column of water rose twenty feet above the surface of the creek.

"Safe!" cried Ned, triumphantly. "I knew I should win—but by the Jumping Jeremiah, as the Unknown would say, that man shall pay for this!"

Looking back, Ned saw that Dick, Edith, the Unknown and Mr. Trueman had gained the shore in safety.

The detective was in the act of pulling Phil Avery out of the water. Dick waved his hat at Ned, who now seized an oar and began working the launch in toward the creek.

What was Young Klondike about now?

It seemed the height of folly for him to land on that side of the creek, his friends thought, as they watched him, but Ned was usually one of the kind who made no mistakes.

Through it all he had not lost sight of Dutch Heinrich until the moment of the explosion.

Then there went up a shower of stones with the water out of the creek, and Young Klondike saw one particularly big fragment go flying Dutch Heinrich's way.

Suddenly the villain flung up his hands and dropped among the rocks.

"He was hit!" thought Ned, and this accounts for his action, and for the fact that the instant the launch touched the bank Ned sprang ashore and ran at full speed toward the place where the villain had disappeared.

"Hold on, there! Hold on! Take no more chances!" roared the Unknown. "That's no single-handed job! Don't you try it, Ned!"

Ned waved his hand and ran on. He could see Heinrich lying there among the rocks, and he thought capture would be easy. When at last he came to

the place the big claim jumper opened his eyes and groaned:

"Don't kill me, Young Klondike, don't kill me," he whined. "I'm a dying man and you want to show some mercy. I surrender! All my gang have turned on me. I am here alone."

"Get up," said Ned. "For a dying man you have a lot to say. Get up and come with me to the launch. I'll take charge of you."

Dutch Heinrich arose heavily, muttering something about having been hit by the flying rock, and that he reckoned his back was broken. He certainly did move like a man in great pain.

But Young Klondike, bold and shrewd as he unquestionably was in taking the course he did, was now making a great mistake.

This man had formally been a variety actor, and was able to play any part he chose. He was a thoroughly treacherous fellow, and as strong as a bull. Now he was simply playing possum, and staking all his chances on one desperate move, for he had not been hit with the rock at all, and was not half as near death as Young Klondike himself, for he had fully determined to kill Ned if he could.

"Get to the boat!" said Ned, sternly, at the same time drawing his revolver and covering the fellow. "What do you mean by trying to blow us up? Couldn't you see that one of your own gang was on the launch?"

"He's no friend of mine," growled Heinrich, staggering along the bank with every appearance of weakness. "We had our row up in the crater. I've shaken all the gang. Don't ask me why I did it, boss. I see now that I was a blamed fool to try any such game as I did."

All this was true enough. There had been trouble between Dutch Heinrich and his partners, as Ned afterwards learned.

Soon they reached the launch. Dick and the Unknown were running along the opposite bank and were almost abreast of them.

The detective was shouting to Ned to hold Dutch Heinrich covered until he could swim the creek and help him, when all at once to their horror they saw the fellow turn, seize the revolver, and fire point blank at Young Klondike's head.

Ned threw up his hands and dropped, while Heinrich sprang for the launch, pushed off, started the engine, and went whirling along with the rapid current.

"Shoot him! Shoot him!" roared the Unknown. "He has killed Young Klondike! Oh, why haven't I my rifle here!"

He fired every shot in his revolver and so did Dick, but Heinrich dropped flat in the launch and was whirled away around a turn of the creek and lost to view behind the cliffs.

It was an exciting moment and one which neither Dick nor poor Edith, who, wild with anxiety, was hurrying along the bank, were ever likely to forget.

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Then they saw Ned stagger to his feet and wave his hand.

"All right!" he shouted. "It was only a scratch! Stop that scoundrel! He must not get the results of all our work on the Man in the Moon!"

This was easier said than done. The Unknown ran around the cliffs hot haste, and Dick was about to swim over to Ned, but Young Klondike called out to him not to do it, that he would come across himself.

Now, Ned was the only one of the party with dry clothes, but he soon made himself even with the rest, for he plunged into the creek and swam across to be pulled out by Dick and Edith, who were almost beside themselves with the joy of finding him still alive.

"Where are you hit?" demanded Edith. "Is it anything serious? Tell us, quick!"

"Just nothing at all," answered Ned, pointing to his left temple. "There, see for yourselves. It is a mere scratch, but it stunned me for the moment. That scoundrel was too quick for me, but it makes me furious to think that he caught me as he did."

"He's up to anything," called out Phil Avery, who was being hurried along by Mr. Trueman. "Why didn't you kill the skunk while you had the chance, Young Klondike? You'd have done it all right enough if you knowed him as well as I do."

At this moment a loud shout from the Unknown attracted the attention of everybody.

The detective had passed around the bend, and they could not see him, but in a moment, as they hurried forward, they met him coming toward them on the run.

"I can't think what has become of him," he said. "Hurry up here and let's get down to business. Tell me where that launch is, if you can, Young Klondike. It seems to have vanished into the air."

They were around the bend in a moment, and found themselves face to face with a mystery.

Just as the Unknown said, the launch was nowhere to be seen, and yet here the creek ran straight along the gulch for a mile or more.

To fancy that the launch could have gone beyond the range of their vision was to suppose the impossible. Most mysteriously it had disappeared.

"Well, it certainly beats me," said Ned. "What will happen next?"

"Next thing on the programme is to knock a big hole through this mystery!" exclaimed the detective. "Of course there is a cave here somewhere, and he has gone and run the launch into it, that's clear enough."

"As clear as mud," said Edith. "Show us your cave, Zed."

"By the Jumping Jeremiah, if I could show it to you I should be in it now," replied the detective. "It must be on this side, though, because if it was on the other we could see it. Come on! Come on! We'll find it if it is to be found, you bet!"

They had not gone two hundred yards along the bank before all were startled by a frightful yell which reached their ears in a muffled way.

"Help! Help! Save me! Gott in Himmel! This way!"

"That's Dutch Heinrich!" cried Ned. "Where can he be?"

Again the cries were heard, but now they could not distinguish words, and mingled with them were certain snapping, snarling sounds which helped to solve the mystery in part.

"It's a bear! It's a bear!" cried Edith. "Don't you hear?"

At the same instant Ned sprang over the bank into a creek, a descent of about ten feet.

"They are right under us!" he cried. "The cave must be here!"

Dick and the Unknown instantly followed. Edith remained on the bank, for Ned called to her to stay where she was.

The creek was shallow here, the water being not more than waist deep, and there opening in under the bank was a cave, much such a place as where Young Klondike had hid the launch at the hut, only the entrance was from the water here.

The cries kept right up, and looking in all could see the launch about twenty feet ahead. Dutch Heinrich was standing upright in it, struggling with a big black bear which had thrown its paws around him, and was crushing the scoundrel's ribs in his deadly embrace.

Bang! Bang! Bang!

Three shots rang out, for each of the boys instantly fired and those three shots settled the whole business; the bear fell back dead into the water, and Dutch Heinrich with broken ribs, dropped fainting in the boat an easy capture for the Unknown who was at his side in a second.

"He's not dead!" cried the detective. "By the Jumping Jeremiah, two straight hits in one day! I've got my man again, but it's a question if the game is worth the candle. Look, Young Klondike! Look at the bear!"

"Jack!" gasped Ned. "Oh, if I had only known!"

And Jack it was sure enough, and Jack was dead, but whether it was Young Klondike's bullet that killed him, or Dick's, or the Unknown's, they knew as little as how the bear came to be in the cave.

Yes, poor Jack's career was ended and our story ends with it, for there were no adventures worth noting after this.

Jack was skinned and cut up although it did seem a shame to eat him, and all hands went on down the creek reaching the Young Klondike mine in safety.

Later Dutch Heinrich and Phil Avery were turned over to the Vigilance Committee, who ran them out of the country and they were never heard of again.

Golden & Luckey paid Mr. Trueman his money, and gave him his share of the gold obtained by working the Man in the Moon, and the old miner went on his way rejoicing. When last heard of he was in Dawson City waiting for a chance to get to the States.

Young Klondike and his friends soon returned to

the Man in the Moon with a large number of workmen, and the work of sinking the shaft at the place where the bear scratched began.

At last accounts the Man in the Moon was doing splendidly, but Ned, Dick, Edith and the Unknown were soon on the move again, seeking new adventures in their usual style.

The next number of the series details doings more interesting even than the story of the Big Black Bear. We advise all to read it. Look out for "YOUNG KLONDIKE'S ICE BOAT EXPRESS; OR, THE GOLDEN CAVE ON THE GLACIER."

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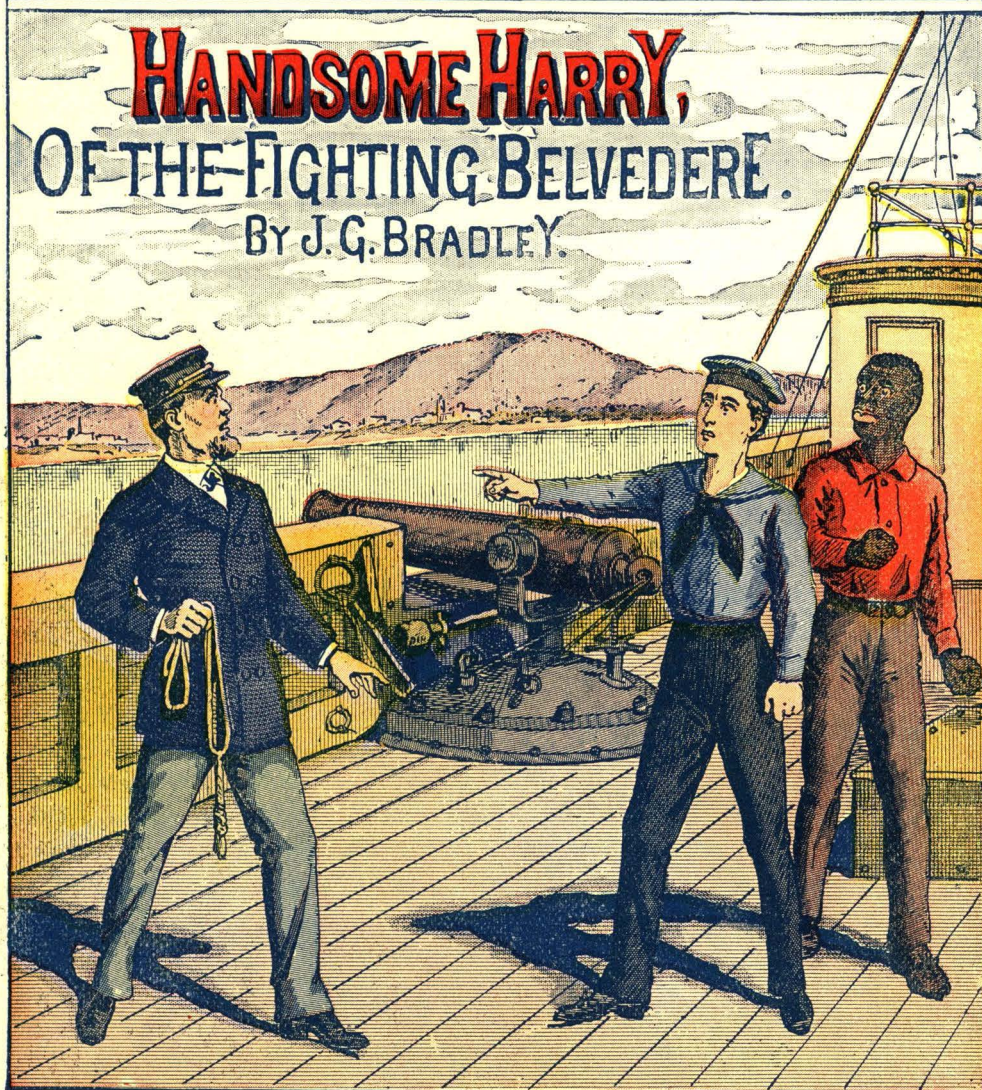
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